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REINTEGRATION AS RECOGNITION
EX-COMBATANT AND VETERAN POLITICS
IN NAMIBIA

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of Namibian ex-combatant and veteran policies after the country's transition to independence in 1990. Instead of assessing the successfulness of reintegration against its stated objectives or the perspective of post-conflict policy discourses, it examines the politics of reintegration as a process of multiform negotiation over recognition and entitlements for the ex-combatants, and political authority and legitimacy for party and government leaders. The study interrogates the ways in which this process reflects and contributes to postcolonial Namibian politics, state formation and citizenship. It is based on nine months of fieldwork in 2002, 2003 and 2009 and its main sources include ethnographic observation, life historical interviews with ex-combatants, thematic interviews with politicians and civil servants, grey literature as well as Namibian newspapers and internet sources.

The study finds that instead of being a neutral exercise in post-conflict management and peacebuilding, Namibian reintegration has been motivated by more exclusive ideas of the nation and by the special bond between the ruling party and the former liberation movement Swapo and its formerly exiled cadres. This close tie and the characterization of Swapo combatants as heroes who hold a special place in the Namibian narrative of national liberation have repeatedly enabled Swapo ex-combatants to demand recognition, employment, monetary compensation and other benefits. Coupled with this, the relative strength of the Namibian state and economy has made it possible to plan and implement ex-combatant reintegration as a predominantly domestic process without the close involvement of international agencies. Hence, it has been possible to diverge from mainstream disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes and attempt to solve the ex-combatant question by broad-based public employment. After most ex-combatants were employed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, however, their demands and policy responses shifted towards monetary compensation. The domestic character of Namibian reintegration also made it possible to implement ex-combatant and veteran policies selectively so that former Swapo exiles have gradually been transformed into an officially recognized group of 'veterans' while their former enemies, Namibian fighters of South African surrogate forces, have been sidelined.

This process of domestically driven, selective reintegration has multiple broad implications. First, as Namibia has recently emerged from a long period of violent conflict, security concerns and the imperative to control organized violence are clearly visible. The targeting of Swapo ex-combatants in reintegration and their recruitment to the public service, particularly the uniformed services, have relinked their fates with that of the Swapo government, pacifying them and making them useful in consolidating the hold of the regime over the security agencies and the marginal and frontier areas and populations. Indeed, a key reason why the demand politics of the ex-combatants have been so successful is that their interests have been largely congruent with the perceived interests of the political elite.

Second, the tendency of Namibian reintegration to entrench involvement in liberationist history as a criterion of full membership in the political community, creating an ever-widening circle of ‘veterans’ versus others, provides an interesting comparison with struggles over recognition and citizenship elsewhere in Africa which are often framed in terms of language, religion, ethnicity, race or historical origins. The movements thus generated may adopt anti-national stances but they are as likely to seek to reformulate and colonize nationalism itself. Namibian ex-combatant reintegration, on the other hand, exemplifies a situation where nationalism as a supposedly unifying force still has salience but has been appropriated by a particular narrative of belonging. Thus, instead of representing a break from inclusive citizenship towards increasingly codified particular identities that compete within the national space, the Namibian case demonstrates the coexistence of a legal concept of universal national citizenship with a pervasive ideology of national belonging. The latter, however, inherently contradicts the supposed universalism of legal citizenship.

The long-term effects of Namibian veteran politics remain to be seen. On the one hand, the aim to reconcile and build a nation, evident in some of the decisions and statements associated with reintegration as well as in Namibian political discourse more generally, is countered by the persistence of pre-independence political logics and divisions, and a concentration of power according to liberationist fault lines. It is not surprising that a militant version of nationalism seems appealing to certain political elites in their bid to justify the current regime and entrench their own positions in it. On the other hand, in the long run the politics of ex-combatants and veterans may also offer a template for more broad-based demands that question

entrenched patterns of economic and political privilege, and provoke responses that may lead towards more inclusive citizenship and more broadly legitimate authority.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CoD	Congress of Democrats
DB	Development Brigade
DBC	Development Brigade Corporation
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola
NAMPOL	Namibian Police
NDF	Namibia Defence Force
NGO	non-governmental organization
NSHR	National Society for Human Rights
NYSS	National Youth Service Scheme
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPC	Ovamboland People's Congress
OPO	Ovamboland People's Organization
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
RDP	Rally for Democracy and Progress
SFF	Special Field Force
SIPE	Socioeconomic Integration Programme for Ex-Combatants
SWANU	South West Africa National Union
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
SWAPOL	South West African Police
SWATF	South West Africa Territorial Force
TCEC	Technical Committee on Ex-Combatants
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola
UNTAG	United Nations Transition Assistance Group
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

1 INTRODUCTION: NEGOTIATING 'REINTEGRATION'

Namibia became an independent state in 1990 after over one hundred years of German colonialism and South African occupation.¹ A liberation movement, Swapo,² fought a bush war against the South African army and its Namibian surrogate forces, the South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF), and a paramilitary police unit, Koevoet, between 1966 and 1989. After a UN-supervised transition period, Swapo won the first free, universal election and became the ruling party. When the war came to an end in 1989, fighting forces on both sides were demobilized. Since then, these people, spoken of as ex-combatants, former fighters and war veterans, have attracted repeated attention as a problematic group that needs to be reintegrated into society, a goal that has often been justified by national security. Due to their perceived capacities for violence and collective action, the ex-combatants have been seen as a potential threat, both in terms of political unrest and conventional crime: a view that has obvious resonance with the recent global securitization of development discourse and practice (Duffield 2001, 2007; Kaldor 2007; Chandler 2007; Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007), and the concomitantly flourishing literature on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) (see Chapter 3). However, I will argue that in addition to security concerns, the Namibian ex-combatant reintegration project is strongly rooted in local politico-economic relations in general, and the history of close relations between the current political elite and Swapo ex-combatants in particular.

Ex-combatant reintegration measures have largely pacified the ex-combatants but have also drawn lines of inclusion and exclusion through Namibian society, creating groups who have not been granted ex-combatant status and do not receive the associated benefits, but feel that they should. Paradoxically, over time ex-combatant policies have seemingly grown to touch more, not fewer, Namibians.

¹ Earlier versions of parts of this dissertation have been published in Metsola 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010a, and Metsola and Melber 2007. These have been considerably reworked and reorganized here.

² Before independence, the official name of the movement was 'South West Africa People's Organization', abbreviated as SWAPO. After independence, the name was changed to the 'Swapo Party'. For the sake of convenience, I will use the name Swapo to refer to both the liberation movement and the post-independence party.

On the other hand, reintegration measures have failed to capture some of the potential beneficiaries for various reasons.

Reintegration could easily be read as an attempt to find solutions to the practical problem of the survival and well-being of a particular segment of the population and, consequently, to issues of security and political stability. Many studies, both in Namibia and elsewhere, have examined the situation of ex-combatants and the conditions for successful reintegration along these lines, and assessed interventions from this point of view.³ My objective is different. Rather than focusing on the stated objectives of reintegration from the perspective of post-conflict policy discourses, I have endeavoured to examine the politics of reintegration as a multiform process of negotiation between the various parties involved. At stake in it have been recognition and entitlement for the ex-combatants, and political authority and legitimacy for party and government leaders. I want, first, to provide a detailed description of the phenomenon of reintegration in Namibia, and second, to explore the broader implications this process has had on Namibian state formation and citizenship.⁴ My emphasis has been on the period from 1998 onwards, when large-scale public employment was adopted as the main route of reintegration.

The main question this study seeks to answer is: How does ex-combatant reintegration, and the negotiation between ex-combatants and political authorities, reflect and contribute to postcolonial Namibian politics, state formation and citizenship? This question can be approached through the following subquestions: Why have ex-combatants been such a central group on the political map of Namibia since independence? What claims or demands (for recognition, material benefits, rights, authority or loyalty) have the ex-combatants and the political authorities made of each other in their encounters? How and in which situations have these claims been made and how have they been negotiated? Why have some groups of people who are potentially classifiable as ex-combatants been treated differently in reintegration? How have the stances taken by the various groups towards reintegration differed from each other? What are the consequences for statehood and

³ For Namibia, see Tapscott and Mulongeni (1990); Tamas (1992); Fikeni (1992); Simon and Preston (1993); Preston *et al.* (1993); Tapscott (1994); Gleichmann (1994a); Preston (1994, 1997); Colletta *et al.* (1996); LeBeau (2005); McMullin (2005, 2013a: 78-115); Dzinesa (2006).

⁴ Studies with similar objectives have been undertaken in Zimbabwe (Kriger 1995, 2003, 2006) and Mozambique (Schafer 2007) but not in Namibia.

citizenship in Namibia of large-scale public employment and other preferential treatment for ex-combatants?

In looking for answers to these questions, this study contributes to a range of interrelated theoretical discussions. Although it examines a particular case in one country, it has bearing on a number of broader issues, such as the dynamics of post-conflict societies, the characteristics of postcolonial African states, and their relations with the populations that reside in their territories. In part, this study criticizes the flourishing post-conflict reconstruction, state-building and DDR discourses that tend to approach reintegration as a generalized technique (or set of techniques) that can be used to manage post-conflict transitions in largely similar ways in different contexts. Instead, I seek to demonstrate the deep embeddedness of processes of reintegration in local socio-political dynamics, involving the appropriation and modification of global techniques of reintegration in ways that might have unexpected consequences. On a more general level, the study contributes to examinations of the emergence of statehood from long processes of negotiation and conflict between political authorities, state functionaries and the people. The case of ex-combatants sheds light on the process of state formation in Namibia precisely because of the active interplay between various authorities and the ex-combatants. It offers empirical insights into both the dynamics of recognition and marginalization, and the production and performance of power and authority in everyday practices. I have studied empirical, processual statehood at two levels: first, the ways in which reintegration was negotiated and what different actors did during the process; and second, how those touched by reintegration negotiate the daily demands and opportunities of their social and economic realities and how this contributes to the construction of political power.

To offer the reader some preliminary guidance through what follows, I will briefly present my argument. Comparative studies of long-term state formation have revealed that the processes involved comprise inherently fragile shifts towards gradual institutionalization that involve multiple forms of power. Compliance based on legitimacy is likely to be less fragile than compliance based on sheer coercion, and broad-based legitimacy is likely to be less fragile than legitimacy based on recognizing only strategic segments of the population. The Namibian case that I discuss is an example of efforts to construct legitimate political authority after a long

period of often-coercive colonial authoritarianism. This involves multiple possibilities and choices that the ex-combatant issue highlights.

Namibia does not fit the general narrative templates of postcolonial African states: it is not 'failed' or 'fragile' or embroiled in various forms of ethnic, autochthonous or religious tensions. But instead of bracketing Namibia outside debates on African statehood and citizenship I argue that it is extremely well suited for engaging them, precisely because of the contrast it offers to the more standard cases and views. Colonial violence was instrumental in creating the Namibian state and many of its administrative and socioeconomic institutions. The current regime arose out of a liberation war that lasted over twenty years. This history has important implications for the construction of political authority in contemporary Namibia. On the one hand, Swapo's legitimacy largely builds upon its credentials as a liberation movement; on the other, the legacies of authoritarianism, a sharply bifurcated economy and divisions engendered by the war generate challenges to this legitimacy.

The issue is largely about the degree to which current forms of creating and maintaining political power, and the strategies of negotiating its bases with the citizens, are either broad-based or exclusive. The case of ex-combatant and veteran policies and politics is informative in this respect, as it reveals a pattern of negotiation between the regime and a strategically placed constituency. This process is intimately linked with particular techniques of harnessing ex-combatant agency through registration, employment and compensation; it is also tied to the management of memories, articulating them with a broader historical narrative that is instrumental in crafting a particular version of nationalism. As in the cases of politics of recognition that are organized along the lines of differences in ethnicity, religion, tales of historical origins, language or other 'cultural' indicators, Namibian ex-combatant and veteran politics have also produced inclusions and exclusions. However, instead of being reactions to an imploded model of universal citizenship and attempts to either discard it or refashion it along exclusivist lines, the Namibian case demonstrates the exclusivist tendencies built into an ostensibly universal narrative of the nation.

It should be noted that this study does not aim to provide a full comparative picture or complete ethnographies of the groups discussed here, but rather to highlight significant aspects of their relationship to reintegration and the associated

effects of inclusion and exclusion. This also means that the focus is on people who could reasonably be expected to be targeted by reintegration schemes or to seek benefits through such schemes. Furthermore, since the issue of former Swapo detainees and dissidents has been covered elsewhere (see pp. 86-88 for references), I have not devoted extensive attention to them here, or to specific ex-combatant groups like disabled ex-combatants, and the San who served with the SWATF. In my analysis of the ex-combatant issue in Namibia, the reintegrated male Swapo combatants, women, youth and former SWATF and Koevoet fighters emerged as the major groups and categories on which I have consequently concentrated.

In the following chapter, I discuss my methodological choices and situate myself in the field and in relation to the topic. Chapter 3 reviews the existing literature on ex-combatants and veterans in Africa and specifies what the present study seeks to achieve in relation to previous discussions. Chapter 4 contains a discussion of the main concepts and theoretical debates to which I will relate my case of Namibian reintegration over the course of this study. These include issues of state formation, political authority, citizenship and recognition. The essay also serves the purpose of clarifying my own stance amidst the heavy baggage of seemingly self-evident assumptions carried by the concepts of 'the state' and 'the African state' in particular. Chapter 5 situates my research in the context of the formation of Namibian political economy, the independence war and the emergence of ex-combatants. After these introductory and contextualizing chapters, I present and discuss my findings in Chapters 6 to 8 where I highlight the different ways in which the recognition of ex-combatants or war veterans has operated, namely as specific biopolitical and governmental techniques, through the social practices of different groups of ex-combatants or veterans, and as a result of the production and management of particular ways of speaking about the ex-combatants and veterans and Namibian political history in general.

Chapter 6 outlines the trajectory of Namibian reintegration from a broad perspective, depicting it as a process that has gradually unfolded in response to the dialectic relationship between ex-combatant collective action and government responses (and vice versa). It then provides a broad picture of the politics and the anti-politics of the ex-combatant issue, focusing on the policies, discourses and practices that have had the management of the ex-combatant question as their objective, the reasons behind the main reintegration initiatives, as well as their

intended and unintended consequences. It situates this discussion against the background of globally prevailing policy assumptions concerning ex-combatants and their reintegration.

Chapter 7 turns to the lived experience of Swapo ex-combatants and former exiles who have become beneficiaries of reintegration, mainly through close, ethnographic exploration of a group employed in the paramilitary Special Field Force police unit in the vicinity of Oshikango in northern Namibia. This chapter deals with techniques of inclusion in more detail than Chapter 6, particularly focusing on the connections between state violence and subjectivity formation in the case of these remobilized frontline state functionaries. Together, these two chapters provide a multi-faceted examination of reintegration policies and techniques: first as planned, negotiated and implemented; and second as lived experience.

Chapter 8 focuses on the unequal treatment of different groups of potential 'reintegreees' and the shifting boundaries of inclusion and exclusion associated with reintegration. It examines groups that, in contrast with the Swapo ex-combatants discussed in Chapter 7, have been rendered more or less marginal in reintegration, and the reasons and consequences of such marginality. It further probes the imaginaries of history and memory politics that legitimate these inclusions and exclusions, demonstrating how the dominant narrative of the country's recent political history reproduces the divisions of wartime, casting different players in the drama of reintegration in different roles. This sets constraints on those bureaucratic tendencies of reintegration that are based on the conceptualization of ex-combatants and former fighters as a social problem and security threat. The interplay of these forces turns reintegration into a dynamic field of politics and citizenship, with implications for the distribution of rights and entitlements, as well as potentially far-reaching consequences in terms of political stability, reconciliation and democracy.

In Chapter 9, I bring together the main findings that I have presented over the course of the study and situate them in the context of broader comparative discussions on ex-combatants and veterans, African statehood, citizenship and recognition.

2 STUDYING REINTEGRATION IN NAMIBIA: ANALYTICAL, PRACTICAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All studies have complicated origins that are difficult to reconstruct accurately in retrospect. Nevertheless, I will try to highlight the most important circumstances in which the arguments contained in this dissertation have been produced, and the choices I have made concerning the accumulation of materials and their analysis. After completing a master's thesis on the life stories of Namibian former exiles (Metsola 2001), I wanted both to continue research with the same group of people whose fascinating histories I had come to know, and to explore new terrains both analytically and empirically. The issue of Namibian ex-combatant reintegration seemed to offer an opportunity to do both. A big part of the ex-combatant population consists of former exiles and I thought that a specific focus on their fates after independence and particularly on their relations with reintegration initiatives and political authorities would explicitly connect their case with broader issues of emerging postcolonial statehood and citizenship. As I will argue in more detail below, in my conceptual treatise, the processual perspective that sees statehood as constantly being constructed by multiple actors and in multiple sites has opened 'the state' to ethnographic scrutiny. In consequence, many of the most interesting discussions on contemporary processes of state formation now gain insights from studies undertaken with the help of ethnographic methods. I wanted to draw upon and contribute to this growing body of ethnographically informed, processual studies of how the state and its relations to its citizens emerge and are reproduced, challenged and changed.

Motivated by such interests, I began my fieldwork in late 2002. However, the phenomenon of 'reintegration', especially when connected to issues of state formation and citizenship, seemed to pose significant methodological challenges. Gupta's observation concerning studying the state anthropologically seemed to apply in this case too, in that the state is a translocally constructed phenomenon that emerges 'through a complex set of spatially intersecting representations and

practices' and therefore localized fieldwork is not sufficient to grasp it fully (Gupta 1995: 376). Those who have studied aid and policy processes using ethnographic methods have made similar observations (e.g. Wedel et al. 2005; Mosse 2004; Gould 2004). Hence, instead of the classic image of an ethnographer pitching a tent in the middle of a village and setting out to observe the social and cultural existence of research subjects, I knew from the outset that Namibian ex-combatant reintegration and veteran policies would not be neatly observable in a particular locale. My subject was not restricted to a particular place, or even a particular group of people. Rather, I conceptualized it as a phenomenon that was multi-sited and involved many different groups of people such as those potentially classifiable as ex-combatants, politicians and bureaucrats involved in planning and implementing ex-combatant policies, as well as various kinds of commentators and observers. This complexity unavoidably raised questions concerning research strategy: of where fieldwork should be conducted and whom I should try to meet. I wanted to uphold the ethnographic ideal of holism in the sense of trying to gain as complete a picture of the phenomenon of reintegration as possible, yet I knew that it would be impossible to observe all its spatial and temporal nodes and all the events through which it unfolded. Thus, without wanting to make any claims of quantitative representativeness, I strove to cover a broad spectrum of the people touched by reintegration who lived in various circumstances, including both those making and implementing ex-combatant policies and different kinds of ex-combatants and former exiles: men and women, young and old, townspeople and rural residents, and people who had found themselves on different sides of the independence war.

My data was accumulated during two fieldwork periods, the first from October to December 2002 and the second from May to October 2003. These were complemented by a brief, two-week visit in 2009,⁵ along with insights from life stories and other material I collected during fieldwork for an earlier project among Namibian former exiles in 1992-3. Fieldwork took place in the vicinity of the border town of Oshikango, the area of Oshakati and Ongwediva in north-central Namibia (former Ovamboland) and in the capital city Windhoek, mainly in the formerly blacks-only suburb of Katutura. In an ideal world, I would have complemented these

⁵ The main purpose of this visit was to collect materials for another research undertaking (see Metsola 2010b) but it also gave me an opportunity to meet some of the people I had met in 2002-3, obtain some new documents and discuss the veteran issue with some of my Namibian connections.

sites with others, but due to time restrictions I had to make choices. I focused on the populous north-central regions, of which Oshakati and its surroundings is the fast-growing centre, as these comprise a former war zone and are home to a large proportion of the ex-combatants, particularly those who belonged to Swapo. Ongwediva is a smaller town that has practically become a suburb of Oshakati and contains a significant middle-class neighbourhood. Oshikango is a border town that experienced a significant economic boom from the late-1990s to the mid-2000s because of the opportunities offered by cross-border trade with recovering southern Angola (Dobler 2009). Windhoek is also home to a significant number of ex-combatants with more heterogeneous ethnic and political backgrounds than in the north-central regions. Most of them are concentrated in Katutura where the legacy of segregation is still clearly visible in residence patterns, livelihoods and identities. Windhoek is also the seat of central government offices and thus the place where I could meet most of the politicians and policymakers relevant to my case.

I focused mainly on charting the life histories and current situations of ex-combatants of various kinds through interviews and ethnographic observation. Interviews were conducted with 101 ex-combatants and former exiles of whom 84 were former exiles and 17 were former SWATF and Koevoet fighters. Of the former exiles, 52 were men and 32 were women; 28 were considered youths, according to the official definition of having been born in 1974 or later;⁶ and 56 were older. Ex-SWATF and Koevoet fighters were all men, as no women were recruited into these forces. During interviews, I began by asking respondents to tell their life story in their own words. Following this I pursued two lines of inquiry: first, I asked further questions on the basis of the respondents' narratives; and second, I investigated their contacts with state actors and their relations to the programmes aiming at their reintegration, including such issues as work history, means of livelihood, whether the respondent had registered as an ex-combatant, benefits received from the government or other sources since independence, and participation in demonstrations or other collective action by ex-combatants.

I also conducted thematic interviews with 43 policymakers, politicians and civil society representatives, as well as a few other Namibians and external observers. These interviews focused on charting the interviewees' views on the

⁶ This was the age limit adopted during the Peace Project employment scheme for ex-combatants; for more details, see pp. 110, 214-215.

situation of ex-combatants, the evolution of Namibian ex-combatant policies, the ways in which reintegration of ex-combatants had taken place, the status and relations of different ex-combatant groups, the demonstrations and other collective action by ex-combatant groups and the reasons for the decisions that had been made concerning reintegration. I tailored this common core of inquiry to accord with the position of each interviewee. All interviews with willing respondents were recorded with a few exceptions that arose from technical glitches.

I culled further insights from programme documents, reports and official statements, official correspondence, parliamentary debates and secondary literature on Namibian ex-combatants and their reintegration. I have also made use of the considerable media freedom that exists in Namibia, reviewing as systematically as has been possible newspaper articles on ex-combatants, veterans, struggle kids⁷ and former SWATF and Koevoet fighters since independence; I have also examined online forum debates concerning these issues. The bulk of my raw data stems from the years up to 2003 and consequently my analysis mostly focuses on the same period. However, Namibian media and online discussions, as well as my brief visit in 2009, have allowed me to follow the overall development of the ex-combatant issue and I refer to events after 2003 as far as my sources permit.

As illuminating and informative as the above sources are, they have limitations that arise from the conditions of their production and their intended purposes. Therefore, I felt that observation and participation in informal situations and associated discussions with ex-combatants and others with whom I spent time during fieldwork had to form an essential part of my endeavour to understand the Namibian ex-combatant issue. While trying to avoid appearing too pushy, I actively sought opportunities to engage in situations where knowledge could be generated through close interaction with participants and by observing their life in its natural settings. Not surprisingly, some participants were more accommodating than others and I cultivated such relations with a view towards generating more detailed ethnographic case studies within an overall mapping of the Namibian ex-combatant issue. To this end, I concentrated on specific interfaces (Long 2001) where people's daily lives connected with various authorities and aspects of reintegration. This being said, however, I should add that I was not motivated solely by the expected

⁷ Variouslly called 'struggle kids,' 'struggle children' or 'children of the liberation struggle,' these are young Namibians who either lived in exile during the war or were born to former exile parents.

instrumental utility of my relations with these research participants but also by genuine emotional attachment to them.

I strove to make detailed notes of my observations and the discussions I had but, as I did not want to interrupt the flow of events by jotting down notes in social situations, I tried to write up my notes as soon afterwards as possible, for example in my car or in a bar. Nonetheless, I often found myself writing notes into the early hours in my room after a hectic day out. While the result may not have been as accurate as it might have been if I had been taking notes as events unfolded, I found it to be the best compromise between the immediacy of real-time recording and affective impact on the situations which I observed and in which I participated.

This combination of different fieldwork methods in my research design arose from a belief that long-term immersion combined with acquiring different, complementary sets of research materials would be likelier to lead to richer knowledge than if only a single method were applied. However, this cannot merely be seen as a simple process of data accumulation through triangulating methods or data (Bryman 2003: 1142; Rothbauer 2008: 893). As Silverman (2006: 291-2) argues, different types of material are not necessarily comparable, as they reflect particular perspectives and contexts instead of a single underlying reality. However, while it is true that each data set or body of material produces different kinds of knowledge or answers different questions depending on its conditions and purposes of production, I believe triangulation may still be a useful strategy. First, one can make comparisons within a particular body of material, for example through accumulating a sufficient number of interviews or observing similar phenomena repeatedly over a long period of time. Second, different bodies of material can complement each other when checking relatively simple pieces of information, like particular facts and events. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the differences between different kinds of material can be turned from a shortcoming into an advantage by actively examining their conditions of production and investigating why they portray the same phenomenon – like ‘reintegration’, for example – in different ways. As they are not created in identical conditions and therefore do not reflect the same interests or rules of communication, their contextualised content offers a broader picture of the phenomenon under study and the various perspectives of those involved in it than a single body of material. In other words, instead of trying to cleanse different sorts of material of ‘imbalances’ in order to produce a

single 'truth', differences can be treated as a kind of second-order source of information, thereby creating a more comprehensive picture of the studied phenomenon by accounting for its various aspects and the different perspectives of those involved.

For example, official documents and parliamentary debates have the advantage of being produced without researcher intervention and thus offer a broader take on 'reintegration', and the opportunity to cross-check and compare facts and statements. Obviously, such sources tend to portray reintegration and veteran policies in top-down, aggregate terms and from a policymaking perspective, which meant that I had to complement them by explicitly focusing on the personal experiences of ex-combatants and their relations to political authorities and policy interventions. But at the same time, the official documents offered an excellent window into the kinds of practical or governmental interests that have informed Namibian ex-combatant policies. Parliamentary debates, in turn, had the advantage of being produced in the flow of discussion and therefore being less polished and more openly political than official documents.

Each body of material has its special characteristics. For example, life story narratives should not be treated as simple reflections of their tellers' lives but rather as being heavily influenced by the demands of coherence and yearning for recognition that inform a person's 'self-writing' (Metsola 2001). Furthermore, contrary to grey literature, observation and interviewing involved me as a participant and interlocutor, which conditioned the knowledge that was produced in the field encounters. Unavoidably, those whom I met perceived my personality, expectations, interests and the possible consequences of what they said or did in my presence in certain ways that influenced what was said or what happened. Likewise, my own observations and reactions were formed by my perceptions. While it is impossible to know exactly how this influenced the production of my field materials, one should try to understand the conditions and implications of such field encounters, including the tendencies and restrictions of one's own perspectives. What I also did to some extent was to try to obtain other people's interpretations of certain situations. I did this systematically with my assistants but also 'cross-discussed' many events with different participants, asking for their opinions and clarifications, particularly concerning situations that seemed significant or puzzling to me.

There are multiple issues that entered into this game of interactions and interpretations between my research participants and myself, of which gender and age are two of the more obvious. As reintegration has itself been gendered in ways that I will discuss, I wanted to examine its effects in the experiences of both men and women. Likewise, I did not want to take for granted the age demarcations adopted in reintegration but, rather, look into variations in the relations of differently aged ex-combatants and former exiles. At the same time, the fact that I was a man in my early thirties undoubtedly influenced my connections with the people I encountered in the field. I found that generally it was easier for me to establish a relaxed atmosphere with men, particularly those roughly my own age. While I felt that it was important to try to gain as much insight into women's situations and life trajectories as possible, my relations in this sphere tended to remain more formal. In terms of age, I mostly seemed to be young enough to mix with the youth in a relaxed manner, yet old enough to appear convincing in situations that demanded seniority, for instance when meeting high-ranking officials and politicians; this was no doubt helped by my education and academic affiliation. Variation in the degree of officialdom pertaining to the situation was also a factor that influenced the outcomes of field encounters: my interviews with officials and politicians tended to be less personal and more formal than those with rank-and-file ex-combatants, and revolved around policy issues.

'Race' was another issue that was an unavoidable aspect of my interactions in the field. Due to its apartheid history, Namibia is a highly colour-sensitive society. I often encountered suspicion, with people asking each other, in whispers, why the *ombulu* (Boer) was approaching them. Considering the not-so-distant past presence of the South African military in Namibia, it is not surprising that a white man in his early thirties should raise such worries, though people were usually prepared to shed their wariness once I properly introduced myself. To some extent, my Finnishness appeared to help, particularly in the north-central regions where Finnish missionaries have operated since the late nineteenth century. Finns are also known to have supported Swapo during the liberation struggle and this is something that I utilized when introducing myself and trying to create rapport, explaining that I first got to know about Namibia when I was growing up in a left-leaning family in Finland, and learning about international solidarity and Third World liberation movements.

Namibia is a multilingual society. Although English is the official language, many Namibians, particularly of the older generations, are not fluent in it. Instead, Afrikaans, the language of the former occupier (and the native language of many in the southern and central regions of the country), more closely approaches a lingua franca. Ex-combatants and former exiles come from various backgrounds and many of them speak one of the various Oshiwambo dialects, particularly in the north-central regions. My inability to speak Namibian languages apart from a very limited knowledge of Oshiwambo and Afrikaans left me mostly communicating in English with the people I met. On average, former exiles probably have a better command of English than remainees of the same generation. Still, there were situations where the lack of a shared language erected a barrier and left me depending on translations and explanations by my assistants or by those ex-combatants with whom I was more familiar. Obviously, the information yielded in such situations is less detailed, less nuanced and more prone to misinterpretations than it would have been without linguistic obstacles.

My two assistants were there to translate when necessary but their presence also inevitably influenced the dynamics of my field encounters. Both were Oshiwambo-speaking townsmen from Windhoek who had not been in exile; both were a few years younger than I and had high school educations and, as friends, worked for me alternately. They knew many ex-combatants and former exiles, some of them since childhood, and helped considerably in identifying potential participants and securing my access to them. In many cases, it seemed obvious that their presence facilitated the establishment of initial contacts and helped the participants to feel more at ease with me, particularly when the participants knew them beforehand. However, occasionally I felt that the presence of an assistant might place restraints upon what a research participant said or did, especially when I had already established a direct relationship with the person on my own account.

My wife and two sons joined me in the field for about two months, which considerably influenced my fieldwork practices. Instead of the work mode in which I would go wherever my research interests required at any time, dawn or dusk, I reverted to the nine-to-five role of a working father, trying to balance work and family commitments. However, having my family with me was also an asset, making my life more accessible and more easily understandable to those I was studying. The implications of being a family man were not restricted to the time

when my family was with me in the field. In fieldwork, the quest for best possible material will at times be balanced against issues of personal safety (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle 2000; Seppänen 1995). Although this is a concern that touches every fieldworker, I felt that the responsibility that comes with fatherhood probably made me less prepared to take risks than I would have been otherwise; I did not access all the places and situations I might have, and nor did I ask all the questions. This concern was increased by a specific instance towards the end of my fieldwork that made me more acutely worried. Some men came to look for me at my assistant's house in Windhoek while my assistant and I were in the north. According to my assistant's wife they seemed like policemen but when we tried to figure out who they might have been and why they had been looking for me, we concluded that probably they were just con-men who wanted to find a trading partner or were trying to play some sort of trick on me; the mysterious men never approached me personally. Yet on the very day I was leaving the country, I heard that apparently the same men had been asking about me at the University of Namibia, where I was affiliated, and it emerged that they were, indeed, police. Up to this day I do not know what they wanted.

This incident was one indication that my research might be considered sensitive – something that I was also told openly on many occasions – and that my motives for doing it might be questioned. There are various reasons for this. As I will argue over the course of this study, the ex-combatants are a strategic group on the Namibian political map. Not only do they possess military and organizational skills but, more importantly, ex-PLAN combatants – and their dependants and relatives – have been core supporters of the ruling Swapo party. In contrast, the former SWATF and Koevoet soldiers are still viewed with suspicion for having served the colonial regime. The ex-combatants are strategic also in the sense of how the past is remembered: former PLAN combatants are seen as liberation heroes but they also potentially hold counter-memories of the violence of the wartime and Swapo's internal problems in exile. Furthermore, in addition to characteristics specific to the ex-combatant issue, there was obviously the possibility of misunderstandings arising out of the very nature of ethnographic fieldwork. Given the history of guerrilla warfare in Namibia, and the pervasive fear of spies and traitors during the war, the intentions of a foreign white man interested in former military personnel on the ground might easily be questioned.

This situation generated a constant concern with how to manoeuvre in order not to attract wrong kind of attention from the authorities or potential participants, something which would have rendered my research difficult or impossible to carry out. It also made the issues of ethical conduct and confidentiality even more important than they would otherwise have been. In order to facilitate my access to people and at the same time to ensure that their participation would not raise suspicions and cause them trouble, I tried to identify local notables, explain my presence to them and obtain their consent before proceeding to rank-and-file ex-combatants. The former group included high-ranking government officials from various ministries and agencies as well as the police and the army, politicians, regional and local authorities and in some cases, local chiefs. Usually such people were also important interviewees. Although most of them were surprisingly welcoming and forthcoming, I also had ample first-hand experience of the perceived continuity of the military hierarchy and associated relations of loyalty and obligation between the upper echelons of Swapo and its former exiled cadres. At times, it was difficult to gain access to rank-and-file ex-combatants, as many office holders had a tendency to guard ‘their people’ from any outside intervention. As the councillor of Ohangwena put it, ‘these people were Swapo members in exile and they still are’. This was mirrored by the recurring secretiveness of some rank-and-file ex-combatants about one thing or another considered to be ‘political’, be it related to life in exile or to the time after independence.⁸

Hence I had to be careful in introducing myself and my research to the authorities and potential participants. I had to balance the imperative of trying, to the best of my understanding, to act in a way that would not have negative social or political consequences for the participants – which required being relatively open and honest about my research since I believe that the people themselves tend to be the most aware of what they should worry about – with a desire not to hamper the accumulation of material as a result of my purposes being misunderstood. As a result, the way I introduced myself varied slightly depending on whom I was talking to and what I assumed to be the best way to make them understand what I was after. Usually I would describe the long interest in Namibia that Finns have had and how I personally got to know about the Namibian liberation struggle from an early age. I

⁸ Many non-exiles also referred to this characteristic of secrecy among the former exiles, saying, for example, that they had been ‘hypnotized’ by Swapo to be quiet about what happened in the war.

also described getting to know Namibian students during my university studies which resulted in my doing my master's thesis on the life stories of Namibian former exiles a few years after Namibian independence. I explained my institutional background at the University of Helsinki and my affiliation with the University of Namibia, presented my Namibian research permit and, if I was meeting rank-and-file ex-combatants, mentioned some of the high-ranking people I had already met. The way I explained my research depended on how familiar with academic discourse I assumed the listener to be. At the least, I would stress the importance of the ex-combatants during and in the aftermath of Namibia's transition to independence and that it was important to gain an in-depth knowledge of their situation, of attempts to reintegrate them and their own perspectives. I reiterated that my research was conducted primarily for academic purposes but that it might have practical implications due to the significance of the ex-combatant issue in Namibia. However, I made it clear that I was not registering anyone for employment or benefits – an expectation that easily arose due to the history of policy interventions in the lives of ex-combatants. I usually avoided explicit use of the word 'politics' when describing my research since I assumed it might be interpreted in terms of party politics, which was not the main focus of my interest and would possibly frighten people off. However, I did try my best to describe what I understood as the political aspect of my study, namely my interest in the ex-combatants' relations with each other and with the state and other authorities. I also explained that nobody was under any obligation to participate. Most of the people I approached agreed to do so but there were also some who declined. A couple of people who initially gave their consent withdrew it later and their wishes were respected.

As fieldwork progresses, it involves cultivating close relationships with the people who tell their stories and share something of their life situation with the researcher. This requires immersing oneself in social situations and using one's own personality as a research tool. In my case, this often translated into informal socializing, for example chatting and joking over beers with a group of men and discussing many different issues beyond reintegration. Strong emotional connections may be established with some of the participants and such relationships may be rewarding and enriching for both parties. Yet the instrumental aspect of generating material for research purposes always remains and may generate ethical dilemmas, as much of the material is intimate. I took the view that the solution was not to try to

maintain distance and formality in relationships between the fieldworker and the participants. However, I also felt it necessary to be honest in the sense of not obfuscating the fact that events and conversations might ultimately be used as data.

While some of the participants in my research worried about confidentiality – which I promised – others were eager to have their voices heard, even publicly. Nonetheless, despite having the permission of the participants, publishing what they said or did without hiding their identities might have been problematic. Research participants often do not have a precise grasp of exactly how the data is going to be used; indeed, even researchers might not be sure about this during fieldwork and consequently often opt to anonymize their research participants, which I have also done. However, merely using pseudonyms may not be enough if a lot of detailed and revealing information is also presented, so it might have to be complemented by other techniques of obscuring the identity of the research participants. This has been achieved by changing facts in the material that do not alter meaning, like place names or dates, and presenting the material in such a way that it is not possible to link a particular narrative or episode to a particular person, for instance by creating composite personae from research participants with similar significant characteristics. Hence, although characters like ‘Pine’ and ‘Alex’, who will appear on the following pages, have their counterparts in reality, I blended acts and statements by similar characters into my description of them. Thus, although all the events that I describe actually occurred and the statements that I quote were really said, not all of them associated with a particular character in the text are necessarily attributable to a single person in reality. At the same time, I have striven to stay true to what I perceived as the overall characteristics of my key participants.

Encountering violence was a particular issue that raised ethical dilemmas in my fieldwork. How does one negotiate the demands of observation and knowledge production with moral integrity? The incident portrayed below (pp. 162-162) where the arrest and questioning of young suspects became violent is an example of an event packed with questions related to this issue (see Westmarland 2001; Jauregui 2013). Should I have interrupted my role as a relatively passive observer and intervened to try and stop the violent encounter? As is apparently often the case when fieldworkers witness unexpected outbursts of violence, the situation took me by surprise and my initial reaction was one of slight confusion as I was overtaken by the quick succession of events and associated impressions. I found myself balancing

between the urge to try to prevent what I saw as unpleasant and undeserved aggression towards helpless victims, and the sense that what was taking place was a significant part of frontline police practice and thus important to observe as it happened, combined with the wish not to jeopardize the trust that had developed between the SFF constables and myself. Furthermore, while it seemed clear that the event was not unfolding according to the rulebook, I had already learned enough of everyday policing practices from members of the force and public alike to assume that it was not exceptional and might indeed be in line with an informal code familiar to all participants. I would like to think that had the violence taken a more serious turn I would have tried to intervene, but I was never tested for this in practice in the pressures of a quickly escalating and emotionally tense event.

Apart from the immediate ethical questions concerning the participants in observed, particular events, proximity to actual violence raises important theoretical issues that lie at the core of my research. It interrupts the neat compartmentalization between illegitimate and legitimate violence, the latter usually associated with state authority and legislation, leading to questions of whether violence authorized or sanctioned by the law or state authorities should be judged differently from that wielded by other actors. Does the fact that states condone some forms of violence, even to the extent of killing in war or capital punishment, make those forms more acceptable than other organized violence? Where does one draw the line? Is all violence to be condemned or is some of it acceptable or even necessary? The answers to such questions are not easy; while activism is important in preventing excesses among those with the power to exercise violence, I feel it is also important to produce detailed knowledge about situations where it erupts, about the roles of people who find themselves in these situations and about the justifications and consequences of violent actions. Only such knowledge can facilitate informed debate.

Apart from the immediate consequences to the people touched by a research activity, one also faces the question of the broader implications of research. I have not sought to offer solutions to any immediate problems. Hence, although my purpose is not to belittle the tribulations that arise from the particular history of ex-combatants and touch many of them, my analytical focus lies more on relations between ex-combatants, broader society and political power. I call attention to the selectively political treatment of the ex-combatant issue and the prospect of Swapo

ex-combatants gaining excessive weight as a political interest group. Some might read this as being ‘against’ the concerns of Namibian ex-combatants. Obviously it is impossible for me to determine the uses to which my published research results will be put, but certainly my intention is not to criticize the group. On the contrary, I find it perfectly understandable that they are trying to negotiate the conditions of their living to the best of their ability. My research has been guided by the perhaps old-fashioned but genuine belief that knowledge in the sense of well-grounded argumentation is the best basis for social and political deliberation. With the benefit of analytic distance offered by my status as a foreign academic, I have tried to produce a non-partisan account of a phenomenon that has often stirred emotions in popular discourse. It is, ultimately, not a definitive account but a contribution to an ongoing discussion.

So far, I have concentrated on the circumstantial, positional and ethical conditions of producing knowledge in the field. However, this undertaking is also very much influenced by the conceptual framings of the researcher. I do not believe that data collection and analysis are a neatly separable stage in the kind of research that I have undertaken. In brief, conceptual framings guide how one initially approaches a phenomenon, including the identification and selection of a topic. In the field, such ideas inform the ways in which fieldwork is conducted and decisions made about what is important and worth concentrating on. Apart from collecting documents that existed independently from my intervention, the process of generating knowledge was largely dialogical, happening in the course of constant interaction between my research participants, my assistants and myself. While my initial concepts and ideas guided my interviews and my first contacts with the people I met, what they later said and did led to conceptual modifications. Things encountered in the field may contradict our expectations and generate new framings, providing analytical steps that guide fieldwork further. This kind of hermeneutic labour continues after the fieldwork is over, as one repeatedly mulls over field experiences and research materials (see Lund 2014).

In other words, no knowledge is produced that is free from theory. In my case, early conceptual framings included an interest in the empirical study of processes of state formation as interplay between ‘the state’ and ‘the people’, the applicability of Foucauldian concepts of biopolitics and governmentality in a postcolonial setting and, stemming from my previous research on the life stories of

Namibian former exiles, an idea of the importance of continuous narrativity in the crafting of functioning subjectivities. Initially, I had a less nuanced and more dualistic picture of the distribution of agency in the constitution of political authority, citizenship and statehood than that which developed over the course of the project. I hypothesized that ex-combatant reintegration would be a case in which the practical concern of dealing with a problematic social group would lead to further entrenchment and extension of centralized statehood due to the bureaucratic, biopolitical practices of dealing with the ex-combatants and their subjective attachment to these interventions. Ultimately, this concern with the far-reaching and broad consequences of practical policy interventions remained central but I came to examine critically the supposed faceless neutrality of biopolitical and governmental forms of power, focusing on the ways in which such techniques may have heterogeneous – including more conventionally political – uses and implications.

While my research was inevitably guided by theoretical interests when I went to the field, I was also aware of the potential restrictiveness of such frames and tried to maintain an open and holistic attitude towards exploring the life situations of former exiles and fighters, and a readiness to follow any interesting leads beyond the boxes I had conceptually drawn beforehand. Universal generalizations are not straightforwardly applicable to the realities we study; phenomena such as power, authority and legitimacy are always grounded in context and cannot be understood without careful attention to it. Hence, I consciously wanted to distance myself from overly theoretical considerations both in the field and at various stages of studying the accumulated materials. Social science is fundamentally a comparative exercise, however, which raises the question of a suitable level of generalization. To what extent can one rely on, or develop, generalizations and what should be their relation to one's first-hand material?

My solution has been to submit my material to repeated close readings – both during and after fieldwork – where I have sought to identify recurring issues and patterns of how things are done or talked about in order to find or develop mid-range conceptualizations and generalizations that stand between raw data and broad theoretical ideas. Ultimately, these are what enable one to connect one's particular case with general comparative discussions. Thus, I was systematically looking for themes or central topics and the kinds of verbal or behavioural responses they elicited that tended to reappear in the statements of the participants, official

documents, political debates, the media and public discussion, as well as non-verbally in the mundane practices of registration, work, provision of benefits and social interaction. The issues that soon appeared significant included the characterizations and categorizations of ex-combatants in the statements and policies concerning them, the age-based bias and other demarcations related to reintegration, the centrality of public employment as a reintegration mechanism, the terms in which ex-combatants formulated their concerns and demands, and the lived realities of 'reintegrees', which I then studied through the remobilization of ex-combatants in the Special Field Force in particular.

I also examined the connections between national history narratives and the ways in which the managing of personal memories might be connected to reintegration and the making of Namibian citizenship in practice, an interest that continues on from my earlier study based on life stories of former exiles a few years after independence (Metsola 2001). I have approached the production of such narratives not as unmediated summaries of the past but as a necessarily selective activity in which the tellers make sense of the past in order to act upon the present. The construction of a life story is structured by certain general rules of emplotment, such as temporal progression, a demand for coherence and evaluative statements of what is being narrated (MacIntyre 1997; Ricoeur 1991: 21–22; Labov and Waletzky 1967). However, the memory work also ties personal history to the shared narratives of communities that are significant to the teller, and reflects conventions of self-representation and issues related to the immediate context of narrating, including the shared expectations, assumptions and interaction of the tellers and their audience (Tonkin 1992; Portelli 1997; Samuel and Thompson 1990). It involves an attempt to justify the self and to establish the sense of continuity as an agent, which is necessary for meaningful action in one's social universe (Kerby 1991). For these reasons, life stories are vital to charting ideals of proper personhood, morality and belonging.

3 CONCEPTUALIZING EX-COMBATANTS AND VETERANS IN AFRICAN POST-CONFLICTS

The end of the Cold War saw a global increase in civil wars and conflicts that soon earned the label of ‘new wars’ (Kaldor 2007). Many of these conflicts took place in Africa and the continent increasingly came to be equated with state failure and predatory or criminalized states (e.g. Allen 1999; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999; Kaplan 2000). The idea of ‘new wars’ has been extremely influential but in many ways the extent to which the concept actually captures a distinct phenomenon is questionable. Instead of being a deviation from prior times, the so-called new wars have often reproduced characteristics of the violence used in colonial conquests and company rule as well as in the maintenance of the fragile power of colonial and postcolonial states. Furthermore, the civil wars that took place during the Cold War, for example in Angola, might have appeared much like post-Cold War ‘new wars’ on the ground. They often spilled over borders, involved multiple fighting forces and alliances as well as external players, blurred boundaries between fighters and civilians and involved the extraction of resources like diamonds or oil. This raises the question of whether the favoured interpretations of such conflicts have changed more than their actual conduct, with what used to be seen as political struggles arising from legitimate grievances being later seen as international crime and terrorism arising from greed and religious fanaticism.

Irrespective of the veracity of the ‘new wars’ interpretation, it definitely produced a new perspective on Southern political violence. Whereas it was previously common to understand such violence in political terms, as resulting from political grievances or as being a part of the competition for influence among external powers, the preferred explanations for conflict now became ostensibly non-political concerns⁹ such as resource scarcity or economic opportunism (e.g. Collier 2007; Collier et al. 2003). This seems to have made it easier to overlook local

⁹ As Richards (2005) observes, it may actually be hard to draw clear lines between economics and politics, between ‘greed’ and ‘grievance’ in such situations.

political rationales for conflict (and their resolution) and propose externally designed templates of post-conflict reconstruction.

Combined with perceived global security threats and the seeming post-Cold War supremacy of liberal values, this imagery of state failure and new wars produced a policy discourse that demanded that the international community should be active in peace-building, post-conflict reconstruction and state-building, and that human security be placed over that of states (UNDP 1994; Collier et al. 2003; World Bank 2011; Kaldor 2007). With the decrease of neoliberal hostility towards the state in development policy, building state institutions has become a mainstream approach in contexts understood as weak, fragile or failed. At first sight, such neo-institutionalism would seem to have much in common with historical studies of state formation.¹⁰ However, while the state-building and state-formation perspectives both stress the significance of social, political and economic institutions, they differ in their treatment of intentionality and consensuality in political processes.

Indeed, apart from having been criticized for being a form of global governmentality or neo-colonial trusteeship that aims to curb Southern development problems that are increasingly understood as Northern security problems (Duffield 2001, 2007; Chandler 2007; Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007), the securitization of development and state-building have also been accused of overlooking the significance of local political processes to the reasons and potential solutions for Southern conflicts (Richards 2005; Nordstrom 2004a; Hagmann and Hoehne 2009; Thies 2007: 729). Northern post-conflict reconstruction and state-building models tend to suffer from a technocratic approach brought about by their instrumental interest in engineering societies, which leads to underestimating the complexities of local political environments, as well as simplified, judgmental notions of the role of organized violence in state formation. They prefer globally circulating, general concepts like ‘fragility’ and liberal templates of political institutions and governance to local social and political structures and decision-making mechanisms that have emerged both from gradual increases or contractions in statehood as well as more radical shifts, such as conquests or transitions from colonial to postcolonial regimes.

¹⁰ It ought to be noted that such new institutionalism takes (at least) two different forms within the field of development: the first supplements the basically liberal and interventionist agenda of aid agencies, while the second underpins ideas of domestic processes of institution building as keys to strong statehood and economic development.

Focusing on processes of state failure or collapse over a period of only a few years necessarily produces a different, and usually bleaker, picture than taking into consideration the longer histories and possible future outcomes of local social processes. Without wanting to downplay the very real suffering associated with African conflicts, the continent also exhibits many surprisingly rapid recoveries from even long-standing state crises: Mozambique, Uganda and the northern part of Somalia now known as Somaliland (Anonymous 2002; Doornbos 2002), may be considered examples.

In recent years, the development policy establishment has attempted to take into account criticisms concerning the importance of local dynamics and actors, but still often falls back on a hopelessly consensual view of state formation. For example, while OECD (2008) discusses such critiques, and situates state-building in the context of state formation, it remains stuck with a number of problematic assumptions, such as the state-society dualism or the idea of peaceful negotiability in all situations (OECD 2008: 7-8, 14), which avoids the question of the nature of the forces that compel competing authorities to negotiate their views and interests with each other or with various social groups. Indeed, the authors appear to assume the existence of the kind of institutionalized reciprocity and trust that is actually a result of a successful state formation process instead of its precondition. In a related vein, Mary Kaldor (2007) argues for the 'bottom-up' approach that involves local political actors in humanitarian interventions. However, when she writes that 'it is always possible to identify local advocates of cosmopolitanism, people and places which refuse to accept the politics of war – islands of civility', it soon becomes clear that the point of view of international policymakers is conflated with that of the 'beneficiaries'. Instead of drawing lessons from the real heterogeneity and multiplicity of the life situations of the latter, let alone their value preferences or political aspirations, the only acceptable forms of politics seem to be those that take the normative agenda of human security and concomitant liberal-democratic political institutions as their starting point. Instead of constituting a legitimate sphere of contestation, politics in this view is something to be downplayed, and controlled as a potential source of conflict. Paradoxically, therefore, this view offers an increased awareness of the significance of local politics but, at the same time, a narrow conception of what forms 'politics' can take (see Chandler 2007). As Waldorf argues, 'the notion is that political and economic liberalization promotes

sustainable and “positive” peace. Consequently, liberal peacebuilding efforts are directed at building the rule of law, instituting electoral democracy, and carrying out neoliberal economic reforms’ (Waldorf 2012: 173). These represent fundamental values that render many forms of local politics suspect or unacceptable in practice.

The propensity of the state-building and peace-building policy establishment to keep overlooking the deeply political and conflictual nature of state formation processes provoked one observer to bitterly remark that ‘the idea of learning to do state-building and implementing it in a planned fashion is such a ludicrous notion that it ought to prompt serious concern over a political mainstream and an academic discipline which allows itself such surreal historical amnesia’ (von Trotha 2009: 39). Although it is impossible to guess the exact reasons for such amnesia, the persistence of formalized, general and Eurocentric solutions is less likely to be a result of a lack of knowledge than of the incommensurability of in-depth, contextual analytic knowledge and instrumental policy interests. Certainly, the assumptions of the ‘state failure’ literature and state-building policies have been criticized to such an extent in recent years (Hagmann and Hoehne 2009; Bliesemann de Guevara 2010) – and also from a policymaking perspective (e.g. Fritz and Menocal 2007; Boege et al. 2009) – that it is hard to believe that they have gone unnoticed by the policy establishment. It is more likely that it is just too difficult to reconcile external involvement and the ideals of liberal democracy, human security and market economy with the view that state-formation processes are largely endogenous and conflictual, and take a long time (see the next chapter for a more thorough discussion of this).

Programmes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), as well as security sector reforms, have become an integral part of the above-discussed palette of peacekeeping, conflict resolution and state-building policy instruments (see e.g. Gleichmann et al. 2004). Modern DDR programmes started in the 1980s and since then have numbered in the region of sixty, two thirds of which have taken place in Africa and involved such international actors as UN agencies, the World Bank and various NGOs (Muggah 2009; McMullin 2013a: 1). The Namibian DDR process that was implemented by the UNHCR and the Council of Churches in Namibia in 1989-90 was the first DDR programme formally sanctioned by the UN Security Council (Muggah 2009: 5).

A survey of the broad outlines of the now voluminous literature on policies concerning ex-combatants reveals that they tend to reproduce an acontextual view of ex-combatants, reproducing them as a special category that differs less across contexts than from other social groups in its particular surroundings.¹¹ With the new explanations of Third World violence after the Cold War, and the associated concept of ‘new wars’ discussed above, the concepts of ‘freedom fighters’ or ‘guerrillas’ have given way to ‘rebels’ and ‘warlords’ in the lexicon of policymakers and social scientists. Likewise, former participants in violent conflicts in the global South tend to be discussed as ‘ex-combatants’ instead of ‘veterans’, predominantly being seen as a security problem with supposed violent and criminal tendencies that need to be tamed by reintegration (e.g. Schulhofer-Wohl and Sambanis 2010: 7-17).¹² Yet despite perceptions of ex-combatants as being different from others, their ex-combatantness is imagined to be a passing stage. The aim is to defuse any sense that ex-combatants might have of themselves as a special category, and transform them into ‘ordinary’ civilians (e.g. Nilsson 2005; ILO 2010).

This shift has also tended to question the political agency of combatants. Instead of being framed as having legitimate grievances and political aspirations, they are either portrayed as motivated by greed, or victimized and indoctrinated by power-hungry warlords. Consequently, the collective agency of ex-combatants in post-conflict situations is seen as potentially risky: as a force to be harnessed within the parameters of liberal democratic institutions. There is a tendency to portray ex-combatants – and the movements to which they belong(ed) – as a potential threat that could easily relapse into political violence or common crime if it seemed opportune. Thus the issue often appears to be one of how rebel movements can successfully transform themselves, or be transformed, into political parties, and how their members can become participants in peaceful (democratic) institutions: a valid, but ultimately narrow liberal question of leadership and political institution building.

¹¹ McMullin (2013a: 21-22) has arrived at the same conclusion. For example, when Nilsson (2005) writes about contextual factors what is actually under discussion are a few specific issues that supposedly have the same influence across contexts, rather than context in the sense of a historically formed, particular institutional set-up.

¹² Such concerns of order and security are of course not new but have lain at the core of development from its origins as a collection of programmes aimed at solving the side-effects of capitalism (Cowen and Shenton 1996), to the administration of colonies and postcolonies (Hussain 2003; Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 2006), right through the current obsession with the security-development nexus in development policy (Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007; Hettne 2010; Stern and Öjendal 2010).

This largely overlooks the possible diversity of the forms and consequences of ex-combatant politics that depend on differences in the histories of armed groups and in the institutional settings in which different cases of reintegration take place. In other words, the political associations and interests of ex-combatants tend to fade from view, overshadowed by the potential problem they are assumed to pose.

The academic literature that examines DDR policies is a varied genre. A significant part of it mirrors the instrumental concerns of connected policies, even if critically, assessing the successes and shortcomings of reintegration, and offering correctives in the interest of improving interventions (e.g. Muggah 2009, 2010; McMullin 2013a; Humphreys and Weinstein 2007; Lamb 2012). However, there is also a considerable body of literature, often produced by anthropologists or ethnographically-oriented political scientists, that argues for socially grounded, contextual explanations of conflicts to counter explanations that lay stress on ‘new barbarism’, neo-Malthusian ideas or greed instead of grievance in explaining conflicts; in general, this material rejects monocausal, non-contextual explanations (Richards 2005; see also Nordstrom 2004a). Another strand of scholarship explores the role of ex-combatants in the politics of post-conflict settings as such, without the direct instrumental interest of policy-oriented studies (e.g. Utas 2012).

These bodies of research contain a wealth of incisive arguments addressing the reasons for conflict, the motivations of ex-combatants, and their social, political and economic situations in post-conflict settings. One prominent and recurring theme is a concern with the reasons fighters join armed groups (e.g. Richards 1996; Bøås and Hatløy 2008; Barrett 2011). Another line of research focuses on the transformation of rebel movements into political parties, and the political agency of ex-combatants in the institutional setting of party politics (e.g. Söderström 2015; Sindre 2014); the focus of these studies tends to lie predominantly within the sphere of formal politics and the political participation of ex-combatants. Substantial work has concentrated on ex-combatants as a social category, examining their social and political relations, networks and ‘navigation’ as well as their livelihood strategies in particular contexts (e.g. Fithen and Richards 2005; Utas 2005; Utas and Jörgel 2008; Christensen and Utas 2008; Bøås and Bjorkhaug 2010; Finnström 2008; Vigh 2006). Still other studies have focused specifically on the relations between ex-combatants and civilians (e.g. Podder 2012; Bolten 2012; Schafer 2007).

The above literature has contributed to nuancing the accumulating knowledge concerning ex-combatants and their situations though the degree to which such research has spoken directly to the central concerns of this study – the interplay between ex-combatants and the authorities and the implications that this interaction has for state formation and citizenship – has varied. However, as a collective body, it offers a matrix for some intriguing questions concerning different kinds of post-conflict situations and, concomitantly, different kinds of ex-combatant / veteran agency on the African continent. To cut a long story short, the overall picture that emerges, mainly on the basis of Western, Central and Eastern African cases, is one wherein politics appears predominantly in a patrimonial guise (e.g. Utas 2012; Christensen and Utas 2008; Reno 2007). As Reno (2007) argues (see also Roitman 2004, 2007), in patronage-based states armed groups generally arise in the context of a weakly centralized constellation of hierarchically placed, partly competing authorities, and subsequently contribute to state disintegration; this, in turn, influences the nature of their role after the conflicts are resolved. The central actors in these processes include rebel groups, their internal hierarchies and mutual relations, civilian communities, Big Men and international actors. The state features more as a formally recognized arena for competing interests than as a cohesive structure that has much integral agency of its own. In these cases, DDR has been a largely transnational affair, involving multiple external agencies. While Muggah (2010: 3) argues that ‘in virtually every country where DDR has been pursued, UN and World Bank representatives have sought (sometimes unsuccessfully) to ensure that national authorities assumed a key role in various aspects of its preparation and implementation’, one may ask how ‘key’ can a role be that is based on external delegation, in this case from the UN and the World Bank. As McMullin (2013a: 235-6) argues with regards Sierra Leone and Liberia, ‘the national commission model adopted in these two countries simply gave national cover for the determinations of international actors about program duration, components and targeting.’

In even stronger contrast to the negotiation-centred state-building approach discussed above, some authors who have studied African real governance have raised the possibility of state formation from scratch in situations of state fragility (e.g. Raeymaekers 2010; Reno 2009; Bayart 2000: 244-5; Herbst 2000; Hagmann and Hoehne 2009; cf. Arce and Long 2000 in a Latin American context). They have

revitalized Tillyan arguments of positive long-term political institutionalization emerging as a possible, if unintended, outcome of conflict and competition between authorities when the central authority retreats from some areas of national territory or functions of administration. Such retreat leaves room for the activities of other political actors or alternative sovereigns, such as rebels and gang leaders, who might sometimes – but not necessarily – garner more, not less, legitimacy than the central government, particularly when they are socially rooted in the area where they operate and provide protection and possibly welfare, economic opportunities and goods to the population (e.g. Podder 2012). After the cessation of open conflict, the shifting of ex-combatants to post-war economic competition with the help of the wealth and connections generated during the war, may have modernizing effects such as accelerated rural to urban migration, privatization of land and primitive accumulation (Reno 2009: 315-316, 319-320; see also Munive 2010; Raeymaekers 2010; Hagmann and Hoehne 2009). In this literature, ex-combatants have political agency that is potentially transformative in positive directions, even if violent. Their enduring networks also appear more as a resource than a threat, in contrast with the mainstream reintegration narrative. Additionally, in this perspective, the external recognition of existing state territories and the power-sharing arrangements typical of internationally driven peacebuilding approaches may halt the process of the monopolization of violence (and its legitimation as a relation of protection) and thus, state formation (Herbst 2000; Englebert 2009: 189, 213).

While the literature that addresses policy-oriented state-building tends to focus on the relatively short-term, peacefully and consensually achieved outcomes of intentional action, the above discussions focus on the longer-term, unintended results of political struggles and conflicts. They offer a refreshing corrective to current received policy wisdoms but might be too assertive in the other direction for a number of reasons. First, European state formation happened over such a long time and involved so many different actors and institutions that impatient institution-builders and ‘neo-Tillyans’ (Meagher 2012) alike should be seriously cautioned about the prospects of repeating it. An additional problem with trying to learn from the European experience is that such an exercise is retrospective: how does one account for those cases of organized violence that did not contribute to state formation? Second, putting too much emphasis on coercion as a factor behind successful state-formation trajectories might lead one to overlook the associated

changes in productive relations and institutional transformations that generate legitimacy over time. Third, in contrast with state formation in Europe, Africa finds itself in a very different system of international economic and political relations (Meagher 2012: 1078): external powers continually influence the outcomes of internal conflicts, and attaining the seat of highest power in the internationally recognized state, rather than founding new entities, continues to be convertible into material and strategic resources. Fourth, Africa's own experiences of state formation are both different from European examples and far from uniform: there are variations in timing, intensity and duration of colonization, between colonizing powers, in the fate of local political and social institutions, in economic specialization, and so on. Fifth, while rebel movements might sometimes appear more legitimate to local populations than the central authority and thus embody a greater degree of 'stateness' in the sense of being able to enforce 'collectively binding decisions',¹³ this is not necessarily the case. Situations vary and must be examined case by case. The long-term effects of dispersed and contested political power in Africa do not offer themselves easily to a grand, teleological explanation but remain to be seen.

The securitizing DDR portrayal of ex-combatants also contrasts with how such groups are perceived in the affluent North where former participants in violent conflicts have usually been discussed as 'veterans': as deserving heroes who have made sacrifices for a greater collective cause and also as victims suffering from post-traumatic stress and lost opportunities. Politics of veteranhood, in the sense of long-term, multiform negotiation over entitlements, citizenship and political authority, have been an integral part of the evolution of the political and welfare regimes in these countries (Schafer 2007: 11-13; McMullin 2013a: 55-61, 2013b). For example, Skocpol (1992), Campbell (2003) and Ortiz (2010, 2012) have documented how Civil War veteran pensions as well as twentieth-century veteran policies in the United States contributed to debates on social policy, citizenship and the role of federal government, noting that the veterans and their organizations exerted considerable influence in this process. Yet this history is not reflected in discussions on state-building and DDR. As Schafer (2007: 11) observes:

¹³ Lund (2006a: 676); see the next chapter for a more detailed discussion.

While past Euro-American policies with regard to veterans often appealed to a language of rights and citizenship, nationalism, and patriotism, the word “entitlement” is conspicuously absent from recent policy manuals originating from the international institutions centrally involved in “reintegration” programs for former combatants.

In my view, this is probably connected with policy fashions and the harmful stereotypes of ‘new wars’ and Southern political violence that I discussed above. However, it may also reflect real differences in the characteristics of African post-conflict states. McMullin (2013a: 45-77) has rightly noted that debates concerning ex-combatants in Africa and veterans in the North have remained unnecessarily insulated from each other. Yet one need not look beyond Africa for striking differences in policies and political processes concerning ‘ex-combatants’ and ‘veterans’. The political role of former participants in violent conflicts, and policies regulating their treatment in Southern African countries, differ in interesting ways both from the securitizing DDR policy reading and from debates on competing and networked political authorities in situations of weakly centralized power. Nonetheless, most of the existing literature has failed to exploit the potential comparative insights to be gained from these differences.

In Southern Africa, former soldiers have been identified as a special group for policy measures in all the post-conflict countries of the area, namely Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia, with reintegration and veteran policies, associations and ministries institutionalizing the issue (Lamb 2013). Many of these countries share the historical experience of settler colonialism. All of them gained their independence after prolonged liberation wars and considerably later than most other African countries. As I shall demonstrate over the course of this study, Namibian ex-combatant reintegration and veteran policies have been a predominantly domestic affair – as has also been the case in Zimbabwe and South Africa.¹⁴ With the exception of South Africa, a trajectory of partisan veteranhood politics seems apparent in the Southern African countries, with former liberation fighters (usually referred to as ‘veterans’) becoming established interest groups that have demanded and received land, preferential access to employment, compensation

¹⁴ In Mozambique and Angola, there has been heavier external involvement due to their weaker state institutions, but even in these countries, politics of veteranhood based on the legacies of national liberation struggles have been apparent. For example, even in the absence of a strong, capable state, the symbolic capital of ‘liberation’ has enabled the government in Mozambique to manipulate externally funded ex-combatant and veteran policies in a way that favours Frelimo combatants and has served the ruling party’s claims to legitimacy (Schafer 2007: 169-70).

payments and other benefits while their former enemies have been formally and informally sidelined (Kriger 2003, 2006; McGregor 2002; Schafer 2007; Wiegink 2013; McMullin 2013a: 78-156, 2005; Metsola 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010a; Metsola and Melber 2007). This has been most pronounced in Zimbabwe where veterans have been active political players since independence, most recently in the country's fast-track land reform programme (Kriger 2003, 2006; Sadomba 2011; Mamdani 2008). Similar developments have occurred in Namibia, Mozambique and Angola, even if not of a similar magnitude. Quite clearly, in all these countries, ex-combatants-turned-veterans have become an important segment in the current power structure and the consolidation of the post-independence regime. Such veteran politics are in marked contrast with both internationally driven reintegration in weak states and the nascent 'alternative sovereignties' forged by powerful rebel movements.

Unfortunately, analyses of Southern African ex-combatants and veterans stand largely apart from those elsewhere in Africa (with McMullin 2013a as a notable exception). It is likely that this mutual insulation is not merely an oversight by the authors involved but might rather result from an intuitive understanding that there are significant disparities between the two regions and the positions of ex-combatants and veterans within them. As a result, however, the explanatory power of debates over the nature and formation of political power in African post-conflict situations does not fulfil its potential, and one of the goals of this study is to start working towards explicit comparisons between ex-combatant and veteran policies and politics, both within Africa and beyond.

Before moving on, two caveats are in order. First, the topic of reintegration is closely associated with the instrumental concerns of conflict resolution and state-building, and an associated tendency to discuss ex-combatants in relation to the merits and shortcomings of DDR and security sector reform. Hence, I remind readers that my interest lies with the broader state and citizenship-forming *effects* of such policies as a negotiated and contested field. In my view, the forms of political agency of Namibian ex-combatants, and their relations to political authority, can be more fruitfully examined in the context of theoretical debates concerning state formation, citizenship and recognition than in the more policy-inclined debates over DDR and state-building. This is in part because Namibia (together with some other Southern African states) diverges from the 'typical' African post-conflict statehoods,

real or imagined, that the mainstream DDR and state-building literature tends to discuss. Second, this is not an ethnography of a people but of a phenomenon: the linkages, interaction and mutual constitutiveness between ex-combatant lives and political power and authority. Studying these linkages will necessarily involve approaching ex-combatants as socially embedded agents, but in a way that is focused on the construction of authority and political subjectivity.

I now turn to examining the concepts and debates that I have found to be particularly relevant for this task; state formation, authority, citizenship and recognition. The discussion in the following chapter will also serve further to distinguish and contextualize the above-mentioned approaches to ex-combatants and veterans both historically and geographically.

4 STATEHOOD, CITIZENSHIP AND RECOGNITION

THE CONCEPT OF THE STATE AND PROCESSUAL ANALYSES OF STATEHOOD

The analysis of political power and statehood in Africa has proceeded through many stages: from early anthropological analyses of the internal dynamics of local communities to the early post-independence political scientists' attention to nation-building and its required institutional and personal qualities, such as political leadership (Lonsdale 1981; Stark 1986: 336-9); Marxist approaches, where the state was seen as an instrument of national or metropolitan elites or a result of local class struggles and articulation of modes of production (Lonsdale 1981; Gibbon and Neocosmos 1985; Bernstein and Campbell eds 1985); the neopatrimonial view where the failure of liberal institutions in African politics reflected a different kind of structuration, in which personalized rule and relations of patronage coexisted with and dominated bureaucratic institutions (e.g. Médard 1982; Bratton and van de Walle 1994; Stark 1986; Erdmann and Engel 2006; Pitcher, Moran and Johnston 2009) that 'worked' in its own way (Chabal and Daloz 1999) through a 'politics of the belly' (Bayart 1993); and the possibilities offered by the state's playing a developmental role through regulating property relations, economic policy, accumulation and investment, and generally steering economic and social policies (Meyns and Musamba 2010; Mkandawire 2001).

All of these analyses approach 'the state' as a relatively stable political structure with certain characteristics. But should it be taken as such? Contrary to its apparent self-evidence, Radcliffe-Brown argued in his long preface to the classic *African Political Systems* that the state does not exist as an entity 'over and above' society but is, rather, 'a fiction of the philosophers'. Instead, he wrote, there is 'an organization, i.e. a collection of individual human beings connected by a complex

system of relations' and these individuals have different roles and hold different positions of power or authority. (Radcliffe-Brown 1940: xxiii.)¹⁵

Since then, many others have elaborated this idea. Philip Abrams's (1988 [1977]) post-Marxist account separated the material and the ideological and treated 'the state' as an abstraction that serves to hide the realities of political subjection. For him, the concept of the state is a reification (ibid.: 63) that conflates two actually existing phenomena, namely the state-system, 'the palpable nexus of practice and institutional structure centred in government', and the state-idea, lending an aura of materiality to the ideological smokescreen that comprises the state (ibid.: 76, 82).

Timothy Mitchell criticizes Abrams for separating 'the material forms of the state from the ideological, or the real from the illusory' (Mitchell 1999: 77). In his view, there is no need to bifurcate the state-system and the state-idea. Both arise from 'techniques that enable mundane practices to take on the appearance of an abstract, nonmaterial form' (ibid.). The separation of 'the state' and 'the economy' from 'society' is not given but rather an effect produced 'within the network of institutional mechanisms through which a certain social and political order is maintained' (ibid.: 83; see also Trouillot 2001).

This view of the state as an effect is heavily influenced by Michel Foucault's ideas of power. For Foucault – as for Abrams – 'the state is no more than a composite reality and a mythicized abstraction' (Foucault 1991: 103). He suggested 'not taking as a primary, original, and already given object, notions such as the sovereign, sovereignty, the people, subjects, the state, and civil society' but rather, 'starting from [governmental] practice...[to] show how certain things—state and society, sovereign and subjects, etcetera—were actually able to be formed' (Foucault 2008: 2-3). Instead of emanating from a state conceptualised as an autonomous agent, power is heterogeneous and dispersed and can be better understood through the study of various mundane practices, norms and forms of

¹⁵ Colonial structures of administration did not form a comprehensive centralized political structure nearly to the same extent as their metropolitan counterparts and this may have encouraged the authors of *African Political Systems* to arrive at the conclusion that there is no state. However, even when Radcliffe-Brown wrote his preface, the regulation of physical force had become significantly restructured and displaced increasingly away from local leaders to individuals and agencies that represented colonial powers across the continent. Since then, these powers have been delegated to the central governments of postcolonial states and, while their capacity to administer admittedly varies considerably, the principle – and contestation – of centralized administration is firmly entrenched. It is convenient to refer to this phenomenon as statehood, in distinction from other possible forms of political organization.

knowledge in multiple institutional sites and involving many different actors and agencies (Jessop 2006: 36-37). However, although Foucault was critical of general theorizations of the state and argued that the study of power should start with the micro-physics of government, he also suggested analysing how these practices are bundled into more general mechanisms and strategies and gradually constitute the state (ibid.: 35-37) as ‘the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities’ (Foucault 2008: 77).

James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (2002) join this Foucauldian current of criticizing the view of the state as a self-contained administrative structure that stands apart from society. ‘Instead of opposing the state to something called "society," we need to view states as themselves composed of bundles of social practices’ (Ferguson and Gupta 2002: 991-992), they argue, calling attention to the material and imaginary practices, for example in bureaucracy, through which ‘the state’ is produced as supposedly sitting above and encompassing society (ibid.: 982).

The above arguments were a reaction to various approaches based on more structural or static conceptions of politics and the state. These included European political philosophy, the systems theoretical view of the 1950s and 1960s, structural varieties of Marxism and the ‘Bringing the state back in’ movement of the early 1980s. The latter was influential in refocusing analytical attention on the state, and bureaucratic institutions in particular, as a crucial part of political and economic organization, while also treating it as historically constructed (Skocpol 1985). In this perspective, the autonomous agency of the state could be significant for economic development and the formation of social relations and political processes. As is evident from Mitchell, and Ferguson and Gupta above, some of the main criticisms of this approach are that it treats state and society as discrete entities, does not sufficiently unpack which actors, agencies or operations belong to the state and which do not, and does not pay sufficient attention to the divisions and contradictions among the agencies of the state (Mitchell 1999: 80-83; Jessop 2001: 155; Lund 2006a: 674-675; Vu 2010: 168).¹⁶

¹⁶ If Skocpol et al. (1985) can be criticized for separating state and society and privileging the state in terms of agency, a mirror image of this approach can be found in a number of anthropological studies that likewise contrast ‘the state’ as a uniform machine above to ‘societies’ or ‘communities’ below, celebrating the latter for their heterogeneity and authenticity (e.g. Scott 1998; cf. Hansen and Stepputat 2006: 300).

Is there, ultimately, anything specific about ‘the state’ that would justify it as a concept and an object of analysis, or would it be better simply to deconstruct it and focus on politics in its different forms, without the conceptual baggage of statehood? For Abrams, ‘the state comes into being as a structuration within political practice; it starts its life as an implicit construct; it is then reified – as the *respublica*, the public reification, no less – and acquires an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practice as an illusory account of practice’ (Abrams 1988 [1977]: 82). So, here we have statehood as a ‘structuration’ on one hand, but also as a ‘symbolic identity’ and ‘an illusory account’ on the other. Likewise, in Mitchell’s view, ‘we must analyze the state as...a structural effect...not as an actual structure, but as the powerful, apparently metaphysical effect of practices that make such structures appear to exist’ (Mitchell 1999: 88-89). This, too, is not entirely clear. What does it mean to have a ‘structural effect’ instead of ‘an actual structure’? Furthermore, while Ferguson and Gupta scrutinize the concrete bureaucratic practices that produce the effects of verticality and encompassment, they also repeatedly speak of how verticality, encompassment and the state are ‘imagined’ symbolic constructs or ‘images’ (Ferguson and Gupta 2002: 982-983).

I suggest that the key to such puzzles lies in adopting a diachronic, instead of a synchronic, approach to the formation of statehood. The practices of government, referred to by Foucault, Mitchell and Ferguson and Gupta are not haphazard and discontinuous. While they may be context-specific and subject to change over time, they also tend to become interlinked, rooted in people’s expectations and assume repeated forms that outlive any particular government. In other words, they become institutionalized and achieve a degree of continuity. The result of such processes of institutionalization and reproduction may be called an effect but it also would not be too far-fetched to refer to it as a structure.

So, when Ferguson and Gupta (2002: 988) argue that ‘a state may be able to create, through mundane and unmarked practices, a powerful impression of vertical encompassment of the “local”’, the problem is that in order for ‘a state’ to be able to create such an impression, there must already exist some kind of complex of power relations that compels the ‘local’ to play its part in this game of encompassment. As Foucault noted, states do emerge as historically formed institutional constellations and it is this particular form of institutionalized power that Skocpol and other state-centred theorists bring into focus. Likewise, for Bourdieu, ‘the state is the

culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital, namely physical force, economic capital, informational capital and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1994: 4, emphasis in the original). The state emerges as a kind of ‘meta-capital’ through which other different forms of capital are increasingly concentrated and their rates of conversion established and regulated (ibid.; see also Aretxaga 2003: 394). In other words, politico-economic and symbolic processes of concentration, such as administrative and political centralization, concentration of organized violence, regulation of economic activity and standardization and classification of information, people and things have historically been associated with state formation. These are concrete rather than imagined processes that work towards producing the impression of verticality and encompassment (see Bourdieu 1994: 12-14).

This is not to deny that such hierarchy also consists of localized practices and that it always needs to be actively reproduced. I also agree that it is important to distinguish this phenomenon of political centralization from totalizing images of the state as above or encompassing society. Clearly, ‘state’ and ‘society’ are concepts of a different order. To put it bluntly, humans always live in societies in which politics in the sense of struggles over, and arrangements of, power relations occur, and states are a particular form of organizing political relations. The duality where the state is seen as a counterpart of (civil) society is itself a historically specific result of European processes of state formation (Gupta 1995: 376, 378; Mbembe 2001: 36-39) but has been transformed from a contextual description into a general analytical premise. Still, the overall image of the state sitting above society is in some ways rooted in concrete hierarchization, which itself consists of historically institutionalized practices.

The main lesson to be drawn from the above discussion, then, is not to question the political and analytical significance of the state in toto. Rather, the point is that ‘the state’ is a historically emergent, particular assemblage of political institutions, an aggregate concept with which many different qualities are commonly associated, including centralization of political power, administrative hierarchy and territorial demarcation of political authority (Weber 1978 [1922]; Tilly 1985: 170). Statehood may also refer to an ensemble of bureaucratic practices, a conglomeration of governmental techniques that forms subjectivities and patterns of behaviour, the imagined unity of the people occupying a particular territory and so on. However,

there is no clear threshold of what comprises a sufficient degree of concentration of these qualities in order to qualify a polity as a 'state'. Instead, the term has been applied to many different kinds of polities, both contemporarily and historically. To illustrate the point with two African examples: the Democratic Republic of the Congo is an internationally recognized state although it does not have a functioning administrative hierarchy that is able to extend its power from the political centre over large parts of its territory and population. In contrast, Somaliland largely fulfils these conventional characteristics of statehood but lacks international recognition. Stateness, then, is not a starting point for analyzing political organization, but a problem that involves unpacking the unified notion of 'the state' and examining the processes through which power and authority are institutionalized or de-institutionalized. This is what it means to study the state as 'an effect'.

In this way, writings by Abrams and other historical sociologists and historians, like Weber (1978 [1922]), Thompson (1975), Corrigan and Sayer (1985) and Tilly (1985), combined with Foucauldian approaches, served to break the state open for scrutiny as a historically formed and heterogeneous condensation of political relations.¹⁷ As Abrams put it: 'The only plausible alternative I can see to taking the state for granted is to understand it as historically constructed' (Abrams 1988 [1977]: 80). This state formationist or processual approach has become increasingly accepted since then with two main premises being widely shared among scholars of this persuasion. First, states are treated as historically amalgamated institutional constellations. Accounts of state formation are necessarily diachronic, and it can be argued that all accounts that approach statehood diachronically can be said to be concerned with state formation, whether they use this term or not.¹⁸ The formation of states can be traced back for decades, centuries or millennia and, importantly, has not stopped but is an ongoing process of gradual change.¹⁹ The second main point is that state formation is not restricted to the level

¹⁷ In African studies, Lonsdale (1981) provides an early example of arguments in favour of processual, multicausal explanations of state formation based on rich empirical detail.

¹⁸ In contrast, a number of synchronic or ahistorical approaches have tried to understand African statehood through comparisons with other empirical situations (most commonly, modern European or North American states) or certain conceptual definitions of statehood (liberalism, neopatrimonialism, weak/strong states, hard/soft states, developmental states), seeking to classify and analyze African states according to the extent they fit into such empirical and conceptual models.

¹⁹ Different theories have been proposed for the emergence of early states. Without going into details, the overall lesson of these studies seems to be that such processes, broad and long-term, are

of high, official politics but involves a variety of social, economic and technological changes beyond conventional politics as well as interactions between multiple social groups. As Vu notes, research on state formation does not focus on any particular institution but ‘shifts from mercenary armies to state granaries, from revenue-collecting bodies to representative institutions’ (Vu 2010: 149).

A logical step that follows from the idea that states (or forms of political authority in general) are historically formed is that the present moment is a continuation of such processes. Institutions of public authority and the image of ‘the state’ are constantly produced, performed, negotiated and contested in repeated encounters between regulatory agencies and citizens. In this perspective, the state appears as a field of relations or an arena of action instead of a unitary structure or agent (Vu 2010: 150, 164; Hagmann and Péclard 2010: 550-552). In Bourdieu’s words, ‘the construction of the state proceeds apace with the construction of a *field of power*, defined as the space of play within which the holders of capital (of different species) struggle...for power over the state’ (Bourdieu 1994: 4-5; emphasis in the original). Multiple actors are involved, including official agencies and functionaries, various other authorities and different groups of non-officials.

There is, however, a point to be made at this stage concerning the official / non-official, or state / non-state divisions. Although it might make sense to speak of ‘the state’ as opposed to ‘other social organizations’ (Migdal 2001) in particular contexts, these are situational variables and it is not a given which institutions and authorities count as ‘state’ and which do not. While it may seem clear that the army, the police, or the legislative bodies are part of the state, what is the case of, say, government schools or hospitals? Or private schools and hospitals from which the central government buys services? Or NGOs that take over duties previously performed by government agencies? Or customary authorities that often manifest some forms of continuity from pre-colonial political systems yet have been transformed into a part of the central government apparatus? ‘The state’ is not a

necessarily multicausal. States have developed in the course of complex interaction of multiple factors – not always in the same combination – that include population growth, technological and managerial improvements, and suitable environmental conditions to allow the generation of surplus, particularly in agriculture. Legitimation by religious or other ideology and warfare also play a part, while social stratification is both a condition and further contributor in this process (Claessen 2010: 18, 23-24, 29; Bouchard 2011: 196; Vengroff 1976: 70). In other words, despite the theoretical obscurity of the concept of the state, an empirical history of political centralization is clearly discernible.

constant set of political institutions that always serve the same functions. Instead, stateness refers to the degree to which political institutions manage to stabilize their command over territories and populations by the use of force, negotiation and generation of legitimacy. Lund (2006a and 2006b) refers to the multiple authorities moving between the state / non-state and public / private spheres as twilight institutions, noting that ‘no institution is state as such; “state” is, rather, the quality of an institution being able to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on members of society’ (Lund 2006a: 676).

Focusing on institutionalization and the exercise of authority instead of a predetermined administrative structure is, in my view, a fruitful move. However, it also raises new questions. For example, there may be multiple institutions in a political space that are capable of enforcing ‘collectively binding decisions’ on members of society, or on different groups of them. Are they all to be called ‘state’? For example, are the gangs of Rio de Janeiro’s favelas or Kingston’s ghettos ‘state’ because they exercise such power? Do the Brazilian and Jamaican states cease to exist in these areas if their security personnel have trouble accessing them? Such questions point towards the need to pay close attention to the coordination, conflicts and hierarchies between different institutions and examine statehood in terms of competing and partially overlapping forms of sovereignty and authority, producing different forms of real governance with varying institutional combinations, instead of a clear-cut monopoly of force and authority. In principle, then, statehood refers to the highest degree of political centralization in a given territory, irrespective of how such authority is organized and who holds it. Fundamentally, there is no qualitative difference between state forms and other forms of political authority and whether an institution is recognized as being part of the state or not can vary contextually. So in addition to institutions operating ‘in the twilight between state and society, between public and private’ (Lund 2006a: 678, 2006b: 686), it can be argued that prevailing ideas of ‘state’, ‘society’, ‘public’ and ‘private’ evolve through the very process in which the institutions of authority gain or lose their hold on power. In practice, however, powerful external forces play a major role in what agencies are recognized as representing statehood.

In terms of society-centred and state-centred analyses, processual studies tend to occupy the middle ground, agreeing that instead of being a privileged level of political agency, states are formed and reformed in processes of political

institutionalization, centralization and fragmentation. At the same time, this perspective accepts that the international system of states is an empirically important part of political organization in the contemporary world and that, therefore, statehood is a highly significant object for understanding politics.²⁰ This study will draw upon and contribute to discussions of how African states and citizenship are constructed in the interaction between political authorities and the people residing in their territories. My understanding of processuality covers both the long-term emergence of structures, institutions or patterns of authority and regulation and their constant remaking in daily practices. After a general introduction to the processual perspective on statehood, I examine more deeply the central themes that emerge from the literature.

COERCION AND CONSENT: THE DYNAMICS OF STATE FORMATION

In the now conventional narrative, organized violence is seen as the core of state formation. For Marx, the state was primarily an instrument of coercion that served the interests of the ruling classes (Marx and Engels 1848: 15, 18; Miliband 1965). Coercion also featured prominently in probably the most famous definition of statehood, formulated by Max Weber, according to which ‘a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical

²⁰ A general outline of the state formationist and processual perspectives can be garnered from the following, among others: Steinmetz (1999); Lund (2006a, 2006b); Hagmann and Péclard (2010); Hansen and Stepputat (2001, 2005); Das and Poole (2004); Corbridge et al. (2005); Fuller and Bénéï eds (2001); Krohn-Hansen and Nustad (2005); Cohen and Toland eds (1988); Joseph and Nugent (1994).

In addition, there are various studies on different particular themes in this vein. To offer some examples, these include the localized construction of authority, often linked with property relations in rural settings (Lund and Boone 2013; Boone 1998; Munro 1996; Sikor and Lund 2009; Berry 2009; Lentz 1998; Gould 1997), elites and bureaucracy (Werbner 2002; Ferguson 1990; Blundo 2006), revenue collection (Moore 2004; Chalfin 2010), service delivery (Blundo 2006; Van de Walle and Scott 2011), regulation of livelihoods and transactions (Roitman 2004, 2007; Zeller 2009; Reno 2004, 2009; Ferguson 2005), corruption (Blundo et al. 2006; Gupta 1995), interventions and practices of categorization that produce inclusions and exclusions of potential citizens (Ferre 2004; Jensen 2005, 2010; Geschiere 2009, 2011; Marshall-Fratani 2006; Mamdani 2007), mobilization and negotiation of development policies in particular settings (Li 2007; Van Wolputte 2004, 2007; Sivaramakrishnan 2000; Ferguson 1990) and the dispersed or heterogeneous forms of power and authority within and across the territories of recognized states (Hagmann and Hoehne 2009; Raeymaekers 2010; Buur and Kyed eds 2007).

force within a given territory' (Weber 1946 [1919]: 78). Tilly (1985) is another notable exponent of coercion-centred theories of state formation.

However, the generation of consent or legitimacy has repeatedly been noted as an equally important premise of statehood (e.g. Claessen 1988), and a closer reading reveals it as an important part of Weber and Tilly's arguments as well. For Weber, as can be seen from the quote above, mere force is not a sufficient precondition for a state; legitimacy and the ways in which it can be achieved is an integral part of his discussions of statehood as a historical process of institutionalization, leading to his proposed distinction between *Macht*, or coercive power, and *Herrschaft*, which referred to authority, that is, legitimate power to which people acquiesce voluntarily and that takes traditional, charismatic and legal-rational forms (Weber 1978 [1922]: 901-4).

For Tilly (1985: 171-183; see also Elias 1982; Giddens 1985; Mann 1993; Bourdieu 1994: 5-7; Moore 2004: 298-9; Thies 2007: 717), competition for survival and crucial resources, particularly land, between rival European power holders led to the need to extract revenue and mobilize armed forces on a larger and more permanent scale than before, which gradually led to the emergence of modern states. This process both set in motion and required a number of organizational changes over a long period, such as better fiscal capacities, bureaucratization, legislation, protection of property, accumulation and economic activities, taxation and improved infrastructure. The key change was the monopolization of organized violence by a single authority that managed to expand its power by either eradicating or subordinating competing authorities.²¹

It is true that for Tilly, organized violence occupies centre stage in European state formation, but the devil, as often, is in the detail. The way Tilly understands violence covers a broad range of different activities. Some of these – for example, the development of systems of taxation – certainly involve eliminating and neutralizing competitors but they also involve crafting new forms of political

²¹ Some authors have questioned the general applicability of Tilly's scheme, arguing, for instance, that the European process of state formation was highly specific due to a dense concentration of rival powers and powerful status groups in geographically limited areas; that many different kinds of state formation trajectories occurred even in Europe; and that apart from violent competition, a number of other factors might play a decisive role in state formation, including the interests and values of elites, religious doctrines, elite coalitions, the availability of foreign capital, and the importation of administrative models and means (particularly in states that used to be colonies) (Vu 2010: 152-158, 161, 163).

representation and relationships of recognition and authority. While the use of force was monopolized, it was also increasingly regulated and located in special agencies, like the army, the police and the courts, making power more predictable and creating a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence. Together with the protection and economic opportunities offered by the increased concentration of power, this generated assent from those subject to the emergent state, thus gradually converting coercion into authority. In other words, apart from coercion, Tilly also stresses the need for potential rulers to bargain and form alliances, especially with powerful social groups but also with the general population, and to offer protection as a counterpart to extraction in the long-term consolidation of statehood.

Hence, the relationship between extraction and protection, coercion and compliance has been immensely important in trajectories of European state formation in the long term. Another such relationship eventually emerged between taxation, provision and consent. The regularization and generalization of levies, combined with protection and, as time went by, increased service provision, led to the gradual acceptance of taxation. This played a central role in the unification of modern states and the evolution of a reciprocal relationship of obligations and rights between rulers and citizens, through the notions of public authority, representation and common good (Bourdieu 1994: 7; Moore 2004: 298-299; Mbembe 2001: 89-92, 94-5; Lund 2006b: 695).

Apart from taxation, many interrelated changes were involved in the entrenching of European statehood over the centuries, including the development of comprehensive legal systems that provided, for example, for political and property rights. Meanwhile, an array of new forms of 'informational capital' (Bourdieu 1994: 7-8) made the state territory and population legible (Das and Poole 2004): bureaucratic unification, homogenization and classification, surveys, budgeting, census taking, statistics, accounting and cartography. The state reached out to the population through obligatory schooling and conscription; health facilities; national language, history, culture and sports; newspapers, radio and television; state ceremonies; the building of road, rail and communication infrastructure; banking; water supply and electricity (Bourdieu 1994: 7-8; Anderson 1991; Van de Walle and Scott 2011: 7-11). The extension of administration and services also contributed to an increase in public employment.

Such multiple changes contributed towards the ‘penetration, standardization and accommodation’ (van de Walle and Scott 2011: 9-10) that further institutionalized the modern state as a seemingly unitary entity, but one which is actually the cumulative effect of instances where officials and bureaucrats nominate, recognize rights, make demands and provide services and benefits, and the recipients, in turn, accept these (see Sikor and Lund 2009: 1, 8-9; Lund 2006a: 675). This game of mutual demands and recognition between officials and citizens gradually resulted in the codification of the supreme authority or ‘symbolic capital’ of the state in law and bureaucratic procedures, and, simultaneously, the development of the public sphere, the virtues of civility, and the associations and coalitions that came to form civil society (Bourdieu 1994: 6, 8-12; Elias 1982; Mbembe 2001: 37-8; Das and Poole 2004).

The production of legitimacy in these ways may, to a degree, be a matter of instrumental calculation and ‘power-brokering and accommodation’ (van de Walle and Scott 2011: 13) or ‘negotiation’ (Hagmann and Péclard 2010) between political rulers, other elites and the commoners. But this is not all there is to the matter. The ways in which European statehood was institutionalized over centuries became so pervasive that they increasingly appeared to be natural – embodied in the very constitution of subjects (Foucault 1982, 1991; Bourdieu 1994: 13-14) – or hegemonic in the sense of ‘a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders’ (Roseberry 1994: 361; see also Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 19-32; Munro 1996: 114-5). Instead of a merely restraining, external force, power in this sense becomes a productive shaper of perceptions of social reality. As Bourdieu notes, ‘[t]he recognition of legitimacy is not, as Weber believed, a free act of clear conscience. It is rooted in the immediate, pre-reflexive, agreement between objective structures and embodied structures, now turned unconscious’ (Bourdieu 1994: 14). Foucault’s idea of governmentality similarly stresses the cumulative effect of practices that are both material and ideal (Foucault 1991). In this process, alternative cognitive structures and perceptions are gradually pushed into oblivion (Bourdieu 1994: 15).

Thus, the array of new institutions and practices discussed above increasingly created the state as a cultural construct (Steinmetz 1999). These shifts also reflected and further contributed to the development of the notions of popular sovereignty and national citizenship – certainly powerful legitimating devices in

contemporary liberal states. In this new notion of sovereignty, the foundation of authority moves from divine right and absolutism to 'the people'. Initially, it is vested in the monarch, but the social struggles that dramatically culminated in the French and American revolutions eventually locate sovereignty in representative institutions. Ideally, 'the people' form a reasoning, rational, self-controlled, collective body of citizens but, in practice, the composition and the will of the people becomes a recurring problem. (Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 8-9.) This gives rise to new perceptions of 'social problems' (Procacci 1991) and biopolitical forms of government that increasingly engage with turning the amorphous multiplicity of the people residing in a territory into a single society through discipline, cultural homogenization and inculcation of values and dispositions. As the ideal of popular sovereignty imagines 'the people' or the nation as a subject (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1992), the aggregate concept of the population simultaneously emerges as an object of governmental practices.

The Foucauldian account of the shifts in European governance portrays the latter as a process whereby three different logics or forms of power – sovereignty, discipline, and governmentality – are successively established as dominant, representing a transition from power as control of territory and wealth to biopower or biopolitics that produce compliance mainly without direct coercion and have the improvement of life, understood in aggregate terms as 'population' or categories of people, as their object. After studying discipline and its role in producing modern individuality in such sites as prisons, schools, or army barracks (e.g. Foucault 1975), Foucault soon shifted his attention to governmental techniques in such domains of knowledge and institutionalized practice as the economy, security, education or health that are concerned with 'the conduct of conduct' (Foucault 1982: 220-221) 'by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs' (Dean 1999: 209; see also Foucault 1991; Jessop 2006: 37-8; Rose 1999; Cruikshank 1999). In this sense, governmentality appears as the liberal form of power, operating through the idea of freedom; pervasive in modern societies, it influences those in formal positions of authority in the same manner as those who are not. In Foucault's words, governmentality is 'at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on' (Foucault 1991:103).

The above historical shifts lend themselves easily to a narrative of Western statehood that unfolds as a transition from *Macht* to *Herrschaft*, from coercion to authority, in which the relatively successful monopolization of the use of force has facilitated the gradual decrease in the significance of sovereign power as the violent prerogative of the supreme authority, giving way to consensualization of rule and more dispersed and faceless forms of regulation. This reading has, however, been questioned by an influential body of theory focusing on the interplay and mutually constitutive relations between sovereignty and modern law in the course of which sovereign authority is continually refounded in situations where the law reaches its limit and gives way to executive decision (see e.g. Schmitt 2005; Agamben 1998, 2005; Das and Poole 2004; Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 2006: 296-7, 301-2). In the words of Schmitt (2005: 13), ‘sovereignty...must be...defined correctly, not as the monopoly to coerce or to rule, but as the monopoly to decide’. Such sovereignty conditions and encapsulates legality in the sense of deciding whether normal conditions prevail and therefore, whether legal norms apply or not. In the latter instance, bureaucratic classification based on national and racial imaginaries can easily serve as justifications for violent exclusion with Nazi Germany – or colonial rule – providing obvious examples of this underside of bureaucratic efficiency and resulting large-scale mobilization of identities and resources. This line of thinking is sometimes opposed to Foucault, but in fact he did not suggest that sovereignty, discipline and government are mutually exclusive stages in history. In his now-famous lecture on governmentality he wrote of them as complementary modes of power in modern society:

We need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security. (Foucault 1991: 102; see also Foucault 2007: 107-8.)

Thus, for Foucault, other forms of power have not superseded sovereignty in the sense of acts of inclusion and exclusion backed by explicit or structural violence (as claimed by Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007: 14). What emerges instead is a heterogeneous field of power, in which governmentality has gradually become pre-eminent (Foucault 1991: 102-3; see also Valverde 2010: 49).

The long-term process of state formation in Europe that I have described above was certainly partly based on coercion but also on generating consent and new forms of subjectivation. In this process, there was no ‘external’ and ‘internal’ to start with; this distinction was crafted in the same process whereby the state as a set of institutions ruling over a relatively stable territory emerged. Coercion was an important, perhaps necessary, component here. In practice, centralization of political power is not always successful. Furthermore, not all forms of centralized political organization, that is, states, are equally legitimate although, in the long run, legitimacy is conducive to their formation and continued existence and may be generated through a number of different mechanisms: the first is to provide security and regulate who can use organized violence and in which situations; the second is to respond to the needs of the population – and create new needs – through economic and social policies and service provision, which both gives rise to interests that are tied to a particular state form and helps in creating a sense of citizenship; the third is to nurture shared perceptions and a sense of belonging through bureaucratic classification, codification and standardization as well as shared narratives and rituals; the fourth is to inculcate compliance through repeated, mundane practices of subjectivation in such institutions as the nuclear family, the school and the workplace. Such multiple linkages between political authorities, state institutions and citizens are fundamentally important, as they feed back into social cohesion, the legitimacy of the prevailing political order, administrative efficiency, collection of revenue, or control over territory.

The historical accounts on which I have based the above narrative have revealed a significant historical trajectory of centralization and of the gradual ‘softening’ and dispersion of power, from coercion, through the generation of legitimacy by provision, recognition and negotiation, to processes of subjectivation and embodied power. The potential problem is that this formulation easily translates into a teleological or evolutionary tale of the omnipotence of contemporary political formations, as if power, while historically constructed and contested, were now complete and absolute, even if qualitatively different than before. This is manifestly not the case. Instead, various forms of intense political contestations, struggles and conflicts continue to take place both within and across state territories. It is an apparent paradox that calls for a differentiated understanding of power as something that may constrain agency but also generates it in the sense of being involved in

constituting subjects and their material and intellectual resources: making them subject to discourses and practices, but also giving rise to subjective experience, consciousness and the capacity for intentional action. So, even if subjects are formed within a field of power, this does not render them inconsequential as agents; in experienced reality, they face choices and make decisions, speak and act, and it is only in this way that discourses and practices get reproduced and transformed. Power thus does not necessarily refer to the imposition of uniform ways of doing and thinking but rather the creation of a common ground, arena or field of relations where control, consensus and contestation can take place.

Power, then, remains an issue of situated action to be investigated empirically. First, it is better conceptualized as a continuum of influence rather than an absolute concentration of power in the hands of a minority; in practice, most, if not all actors both exercise some degree of power and are subjected to its exercise by others. Second, power, in the Foucauldian sense, is not something that somebody ‘has’ but rather influences all in the form of dispersed discourses and practices that operate through myriad acts and events involving multiple actors, without reflecting any single will. Nonetheless, state formation has been associated with escalating hierarchies and the Foucauldian understanding of power does not preclude the existence of forms of power that emanate from a clearly definable agent. States tend to have a clear stratum of political rulers versus a majority of people who do not hold powerful political office and in this relation the classic definition of power as the ability to influence other people’s actions has significant explanatory strength.

From this angle, the issue of power may be conceptualized as competition among various elites and other groups, motivated by their different interests, values and identities, and using the resources and repertoires (Hagmann and Péclard 2010: 547)²² or forms of capital (Bourdieu 1994) that they possess. State formation may take place if they are able to reconcile their interests or if one group manages to rise above others into a dominant position. From the perspective of the political authorities the main concern is how to nurture state-citizen relations that enable the

²² By resources, Hagmann and Péclard (2010: 547) mean ‘tangible and intangible assets such as bureaucratic capacities, organizational skills, finance and ability to mobilize funding, knowledge and technical expertise, control over physical violence, international networks, political alliances and...access to state resources’. As examples of currently important repertoires in African politics, they mention ‘references to “good governance”, “human rights”, “democracy”, “development”, nationalism, anti-Western ideologies, ethno-politically defined types of citizenship, and religious and cultural identities’.

continuation of the regime. This can happen through various combinations of coercion and consent. From the point of view of the ruled, the main concern is how to produce and insert oneself into state-citizen relations that enable material, social, political and existential wellbeing. This can happen through resisting, appropriating or negotiating the interventions of state agents and political authorities.

Hagmann and Péclard (2010) suggest that the concept of negotiation is useful when examining such processes; however, while it captures some essential elements of processual state formation, it is constrained by the implicit assumption that people and institutions will always try to accommodate each other. The idea of negotiation might be best suited to analysis of peaceful forms of arbitrating interests, for example those occurring in established political institutions, or official negotiations. It might also be stretched to cover various forms of contestation and struggle, like protests, strikes or armed conflict, when these lead to new power differentials and institutional arrangements over time. The concept is less well suited to examination of vastly unequal situations where powerful actors may be able to dictate rules and outcomes (Doornbos 2010: 760-761; see also Vu 2010: 162-163) – although ‘the weapons of the weak’ (Scott 1985, 1990) might give the powerless some room for manoeuvre even in these situations. Finally, the idea of negotiation is limited by the fact that the interests, values, identities, resources and repertoires of those who ‘negotiate’ and, hence, the objects and means of political struggles, are themselves formed within the field of power. The idea of statehood as processually constructed is thus broader than the idea of negotiation, since the former does not necessarily presuppose interaction between different parties, but permits instances of coercion and dictate, as well as a broader conceptualization of power.

AFRICAN STATEHOODS: OUTLINING TRENDS AND DEBATES

Clearly, many of the insights that emerge from the above discussion are culled from studies of European history – more precisely, that of particular countries – and the development of modern state institutions in that context. Still, they have relevance for the study of African statehood for two reasons. The first is that I believe that the dynamic of coercion, consent and negotiation is not restricted to specific experiences

of European history but has broader applicability. Second, even though trajectories of state formation in Africa have differed from those in Europe in many crucial respects, it was the state form of European colonial powers that was to provide the template for polities in Africa during the colonial and postcolonial periods. It is this history to which I now turn. My primary purpose is to outline a framework for discussing Namibia in the context of debates on 'the African state', while also paying attention to the heterogeneity and diversity of the real political formations that exist on the continent.

Dawn and high noon: Transplanting the European state form in Africa

The history of statehood in Africa is much longer, but in many ways the trajectory of its contemporary states begins with colonialism: the starting point of many of the processes that have made African politics and states what they are today. The foundations for paths of institutional development that would continue well beyond colonialism and form the basis of contemporary African states were laid during this period, although the dating of such changes is less straightforward than might be assumed. European influence in Africa, and hence the roots of colonialism, go back much further than the famous scramble for Africa in the late-nineteenth century. European explorers, traders, missionaries and, in South Africa, settlers, were active around the continent for centuries before the advent of official colonialism. They prepared the ground for colonization by producing knowledge, establishing relationships with Africans and creating economic flows between Europe, Africa and the Americas. The slave trade, in particular, was significant in undermining many African polities by engendering predation and population drain (Robinson 2002: 515-6; Mbembe 2001: 69-70). Increased competition between Europe's industrial powers during the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, led to expansion pressures and the era of trade in slaves and highly valued extractable resources in Africa gave way to violent conquest as the European powers sought to validate their territorial claims by establishing presence on the ground. In many parts of Africa, this was conducted with the help of concessionary companies that took on the responsibilities of conquest and government in return for the right to exploit the

resources of subjugated territories (Reno 2004: 613; Mbembe 2001: 29-30, 72). In practice, this delegation of sovereignty usually produced minimal public authority combined with ruthless exploitation of African labour. Even after the colonial powers took over direct responsibility for governing the colonies, the European administrative presence remained rudimentary for a long time.

While coercion was important in establishing the colonial predecessors of contemporary states in Africa, it did so in ways that differed from the European experience of state formation (Cooper 2005; Herbst 2000; Vu 2010; Young 2004). In Europe, the carving out of territories occurred as a long process of competition and negotiation during which state institutions simultaneously came into being. In Africa, a sketchy network of traders, explorers, missionaries, soldiers and administrators provided a sufficient basis for laying claims to territories and, despite the initial scramble to establish the presence to support aspiration, claims soon became facts that were mutually respected by the colonial powers. Coupled with the military advantage that the Europeans had over native societies, this meant that there was little compulsion to invest substantial administrative and material resources in ruling the colonies.

Coercion remained an indispensable part of rule throughout the colonial period (Mbembe 2003, 2001: 25-8; Bayart 2000: 256; Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 2006, 2005: 19-32; Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007). The extractive colonial economies, whether comprising mining or export agriculture, often relied on harsh labour policies, and violent displays of power were not uncommon in bids to contain resistance and oblige compliance. Coercion happened both on a large scale through extermination and imprisonment campaigns or the use of forced labour, and, on a smaller scale, in recurrent practices of surveilling, disciplining and punishing the natives in countless minute encounters in workplaces, schools and so on (Bayart 2000: 256; Mbembe 2001: 31). However, it would be a mistake to take this reliance on coercion as a sign of the strength of colonial administration. Rather, it signalled the weakness of colonial sovereignty. In the absence of external pressures or challenges from powerful internal social groups – and in contrast with the European experience of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – colonial administrations did not need to rely on seeking the consent of subject populations, something which would have encouraged institutional centralization (Vu 2010: 161, 163-4; Mbembe 2001: 25-32). Hence, colonial power remained partial and provisional and faced

immense challenges in extending its control over the vast territories and heterogeneous populations that were nominally under its rule (Hansen and Stepputat 2005). Quite intentionally, the colonies were not autonomous states but outposts of their metropolises, run with meagre resources and a small cohort of officials. Instead of establishing a thick presence throughout their territories, colonial administrations tended to resort to controlling strategic enclaves and routes of production and trade, a model that Cooper (2005) calls the gatekeeper state. The revenue generated from such control, often through customs duties, was used to finance the upkeep of the lightweight administrative apparatus. Frankema (2011) further distinguishes between the minimalist colonial administration that prevailed especially in West Africa and an extractive variant, common for instance in the settler states, that placed a heavier burden of contributions on the population. In either case, the depth and reach of government were nowhere near that of their metropolitan counterparts.

The enclavic nature of colonial penetration into African societies led both to an excessive resort to forceful means and the partial and strategic incorporation of intermediaries among local rulers and elites: a layer – even if thin – of African clerks, soldiers, teachers and nurses, traders, farmers and entrepreneurs, as well as so-called traditional authorities in the British model of indirect rule (Hagmann and Péclard 2010: 556-7; Bayart 2000: 249, 261; Mbembe 2001: 40). Furthermore, while the space wherein Africans could negotiate with their masters was limited, they could often resort to strategies of evasion and exit due to the limited reach of the colonial administration. However, though the involvement of African elites in colonial rule can be seen as bargaining of sorts, it did not take place at the level of the whole polity and was therefore unable to produce anything similar to the civil society institutions that resulted from European processes of accommodation between rulers, powerful social groups and the general population (Mbembe 2001: 37-9). Instead, what emerged was a patchwork of local articulations between the central authority and local notables and their constituencies, which also meant that far from being a uniform structure or a simple duality of rulers and ruled, colonialism varied significantly from one place to another and in the multiplicity of actors involved.

There was a major shift in colonial policy after the Second World War. African middle classes and labourers were demanding better pay and conditions as well as political representation. Worried about their ability to hold on to their

colonies and enabled by rising prices of colonial products, the colonial powers were prepared to move from prior minimalist and extractive trajectories towards a more robust, developmental form of colonialism (Cooper 2011; Frankema 2011). In other words, in addition to coercion and the strategic incorporation of local elites, attempts to build legitimacy through service provision have also been present since the late colonial period, accompanied, importantly, by concomitant expectations by the people of a state capable of regulating and providing, not merely dictating (see also MacLean 2011). The foundation of the project of statist, authoritarian modernization that was attempted during the first decades of independence was laid at this time.

Transitions to independence in Africa were largely hasty affairs that happened without extensive preparations in response to similar transitions elsewhere – along with with the economic difficulties of maintaining colonial regimes under the pressure of local demands – rather than as a result of mass nationalist movements. With independence, African states came into being as recognized members of the international community; however, their internal sovereignty remained much more limited, as they inherited the challenges of reach, penetration and legitimacy from their colonial predecessors, resulting in the democratic constitutions of the new African states soon giving way to authoritarian regimes (Southall 1974: 157). Many factors played a role in this shift, including the perceived risks of heterogeneity and a need to unify a dispersed population and territory, combined with the absence of sufficient popular pressure to counter authoritarianism, the inheritance of authoritarian administrative models from colonial governance, international competition for allies in the Third World and a general belief in state-led development (Young 2004: 30-31).

The newly independent regimes sought to forge unity through nation-building projects, state-led economic development and extended service delivery (Dorman, Hammett and Nugent 2007: 7; Eriksen 2011a: 241), all instruments in the goal of generating ‘instant’ nations and social cohesion, in contrast to gradual developments that took place in Europe through much slower processes of state formation. However, in the long run, the fragmenting tendencies of rule that had been established during the colonial period proved stronger than the drive towards national unity in many African countries. Externally, what Bayart (2000) calls extraversion, Cooper (2005) the gatekeeping state and Englebort (2009) the utility of legal sovereignty continued through the relations that national elites crafted with

external allies, usually former colonial masters or Cold War superpowers, and other donors, foreign companies and NGOs. The dispersal of sovereignty also continued internally. The response of newly independent regimes to the legacy of differentiated citizenship often culminated in continuing the strategic co-optation of potential contestants. The significance of race was largely replaced by other ‘cultural’ distinctions based on ethnicity, religion, residence and the like – apart from in those situations that involved settler minorities of European or Asian descent, in which race maintained its salience. So, after colonial rule had frozen ‘tradition’ into distinct and internally uniform ethnicities (Vail 1989; Mamdani 1996), they came to have lasting importance during the postcolonial period and, as Dorman, Hammett and Nugent (2007: 6) argue, ‘the national question...turned on the problems of ensuring the perception of equal treatment, measured in terms of resource allocation and the definition of appropriate values and symbols for all the constituent parts of the nation. In many countries...this came to be perceived as a zero-sum game.’

Significantly, postcolonial statehood in most cases was not a result of struggles and bargaining between competing authorities and their constituencies, nor was it reliant on extracting resources from the population on a large scale. In an account inspired by Tilly, Herbst (2000) sees this as a result of African low population densities and the ensuing lack of external threats, which have not compelled African leaders to strengthen their state institutions.²³ Jackson and Rosberg (1986), in turn, call attention to the way in which international recognition and external support of African states ensured their survival even when their institutional set-up, administrative capacity and domestic sovereignty remained weak. To survive, the state did not have to be legitimate in the eyes of the local population as much as in those of powerful metropolitan actors, such as colonial powers and trading companies before independence, and the ‘international community’, aid organizations, multinational corporations and neighbouring national elites facing similar problems of domestic sovereignty since then. These

²³ While Herbst’s thesis is thought-provoking, it is an example of explanations that tend to focus on what African states are not, as measured against models drawn from Euro-American state formation paths, rather than on the kind of political formations they are. Herbst has been criticized in many respects: for instance, for his excessive reliance on population density as an explanatory factor and for overlooking cases that do not fit his model. For an incisive criticism, see Robinson 2002.

have provided African regimes with external recognition, which has enabled them to amass resource rents from extracting valuable raw materials as well as strategic rents from Cold War alignment and aid.

While the significance of external recognition is an important point, it is not sufficient to account for the postcolonial perseverance of African states. If one supports the realist logic favoured by these authors and adheres to their assumption of self-interest, it would follow that national leaders would be more concerned about the survival of their particular regime than the territorial integrity of the state that they rule (see Clapham 1998). From this perspective, competing political authorities have to be taken seriously irrespective of whether they arise from domestic opposition or from external pressures (Thies 2007), and, indeed, the principle of juridical sovereignty based on international recognition (Jackson and Rosberg 1986: 2) has not prevented regime changes. On the contrary, *coups d'etat* and other changes of government have been a regular feature of postcolonial African politics. This suggests that one should not place too much emphasis on what African national elites want to do but rather focus on what is possible and reasonable for them to attempt in the circumstances in which they find themselves.

This leads to approaches that take the internal dynamics of African states seriously rather than treating them as lacks – of centralization, of bureaucracy or of accountability – following Jackson and Rosberg. For example, Bayart (2000) and Mbembe (2001) treat the appropriation by Africans of colonial forms of governance and relations of patronage as elemental parts of historically specific African trajectories of statehood. Bayart argues that, over the centuries, Africa has not been excluded from the world economy. Nor do its political forms arise out of direct subordination to external forces. Rather, the thread running through African politics from precolonial times up to the present is its history of extraversion, by which Bayart refers to active African participation in producing, appropriating and using economic and symbolic values from the linkages its societies have had with the rest of the world (Bayart 2000: 218-9, 221-2, 237). Social institutions such as colonial governments, ‘the trading-post, the business-place, the plantation, the mine, the school, the hospital, and the Christian mission-station’ (ibid.: 246) mediated these relations. They provided the ground for a Foucauldian ‘micro-physics of power’ and new kinds of subjectivity, which led to the creation of a new African salaried middle class that was to be an important part of colonial government and, later, nationalist

movements (ibid.: 246-9). So, while Africa may have been dependent on, or subordinate to, the world economy and international politics, Africans have been involved, often willingly, in crafting the conditions in which they live and in negotiating with influential external forces and potential local contestants. Irrespective of the changes in the formal status of African territories, what has remained constant has been the significance of external resources and interests, but not without considerable space for appropriation and manipulation by local political authorities.

For Mbembe, the ‘trinity of violence, allocations and transfers’ constitutes ‘the cement of postcolonial African’ authoritarian regimes (Mbembe 2001: 45). Over time, these produced ‘commandement’, a particular relationship between the rulers and the ruled in which violence and relations of patronage were normalized into enduring expectations and dispositions. This form of power manifested itself through recurrent coercive subjection (ibid.: 25-8), the operation of extensive clientelist networks and pompous portrayals of central authority. Despite the limited ability of this system to generate surpluses, its relations of domination, accumulation and redistribution achieved a relatively high degree of centralization and stability until the late 1970s. In line with Cooper’s gatekeeper state thesis, Mbembe stresses that revenue was mainly collected through controlling the extraction and international trade of valuable resources which was then distributed through salaries and other mechanisms of allocation and spread further through reciprocal social ties. This created a particular structure of economic relations as well as relations of mutual rights and obligations.

In these accounts, the African state operates and mediates between multiple scales or levels, both utilizing the benefits of extraversion to control internal challenges and making compromises with potential local contestants to keep them at bay. From this perspective, characterizations such as rentier states (Moore 2004: 304-8; Eriksen 2011b: 449-50) and juridical sovereignty are merely particular aspects in the long-term construction of a specifically African form of statehood. Thus, while Bayart and Mbembe are indebted to neopatrimonial accounts, for example in their stressing the hybridity of African political forms, their treatment is historically more sensitive, emphasizing the way in which African politics arose from different ingredients in particular contexts over time, to the extent that those

ingredients are no longer separable into 'local' and 'traditional' versus 'external' and 'modern'.

To sum up, since local elites and social groups did not have significant power to resist and modify the build-up of colonial and postcolonial states, the exercise of political power in African states has not mostly operated as a reciprocal relationship where broad-based legitimacy is generated by providing protection and provision. Instead, it has largely been maintained by violence, external support, co-optation of strategic segments of the population and legitimating ceremonies and narratives. Many, perhaps most, postcolonial African states have relied on continuous external recognition and its associated benefits, such as juridical sovereignty, resource rents and strategic rents that can be (sufficiently) transformed into local dominance through patronage and co-option. Their elites have acted as gatekeepers in a longstanding pattern of extraversion that has enabled them to forge local networks of centralization based on patronage instead of bureaucratic unification.

The centrality of coercion in African governance has its origin in colonial forms of government: in the subjugation, extraction and discrimination inherent in its operations. It was carried over to postcolonial uses of power, both as a legacy, in the sense of the tendency of institutions to reproduce patterns of action if not compelled to do otherwise, and as the recurrent need of aspiring powers in Africa to affirm their sovereignty over other authorities and the multiplicity of people that they wish to rule. In the course of attaining the latter goal the use of force combined with negotiated accommodation by strategically positioned actors and groups remained an easier option for rulers than more profound forms of centralization. Meanwhile, the parcelling out of sovereignty to companies, missionaries, chiefs, donors and NGOs has been an elemental part of both colonial and postcolonial rule. So, on the one hand, there is the external orientation and dependency of African governments, while, on the other, there has been a constant need to control contestants and negotiate sufficient acceptance from those sections of their populace in a position to destabilize their hold on power. It has been reasonable for both local and national elites to engage in this negotiation, since it ensured flows of resources and recognition to local leaders and also a degree of cohesion and legitimacy to provide support for the central authority. At the same time, this arrangement is inherently unstable and African regimes have been vulnerable to being displaced by

internal conflicts over public power and its benefits, the whims of powerful external actors, or economic problems that eat away at the resources required to run the system of patronage.

Dusk and moonlight: Crisis and resilience of African states

While African statehood did not correspond to the normative ideal of modern liberal statehood, most postcolonial African states remained relatively stable until the late 1970s. Since then, declining prices for African commodities, accumulated debts, economic and political liberalization and a decrease in the strategic importance of Africa due to the end of the Cold War eroded much of this stability. The perception of the African state as inefficient and corrupt, combined with a general anti-statist trend in economic thinking, led to the structural adjustment programs and a general trend towards liberalized economies and market-oriented development. Later, after the end of the Cold War, political pluralization, difficulties of structural adjustment, and worries over failing and fragile states and international security have introduced a renewed concern with legitimate authority, good governance and state institutions (Apter and Rosberg 1994; Allen 1999; Baker 1999: 132; Eriksen 2011a: 229-230).

In a widely cited article, Crawford Young (2004) suggests that by the 1990s, the era of postcoloniality in Africa had ended, with centralized and relatively stable statehood giving way to the fragmentation of political authority, although he might be exaggerating the differences between postcolonial and 'post-postcolonial' times. There were significant challenges to central authorities, linkages to global forces and diasporic influences throughout the postcolonial period, while the domination of society by central political institutions might have appeared more complete from afar than on the ground. Young also largely overlooks the variations of statehood trajectories in Africa, and the many states that avoided disintegration and conflict and retained their centralized institutions in the post-Cold War period. Still, his piece does identify a trend and is a good indication of transformations in the prevalent narrative concerning African states.

At the extreme, this situation gave rise to the discourse of the 'new wars' and to the theorizations of potential nascent state formation in situations of conflict that I outlined in the previous chapter. However, despite its popularity, the narrative of

Africa as a continent of bleak failures is far too simplifying and generalizing. Many studies have pointed out that even in situations where a clear weakening of state capacities has occurred, this has usually implied pluralization of authorities rather than anarchy (Baker 1999; Hagmann and Péclard 2010: 540-2). Two issues have been repeatedly pointed out: one should not always assume that centralized authority provides better governance than other authorities; and in situations of state weakening, boundaries between 'state' and 'non-state' institutional spheres tend to blur. Many authors have noted that 'the state', that is, the incumbent regime, often does not appear as a benevolent force to large portions of the population. In many colonial and postcolonial African situations, Tilly's characterization of states as 'protection rackets' does not necessarily apply, as the representatives of the central authority might loot and extract but not provide any protection (Vu 2010: 162-3). Such a 'criminalized' or predatory state (e.g. Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999; Mbembe 2001: 49; Reno 2004; Baker 1999: 133) resembles the trading companies of colonial times as well as contemporary networks of international illicit trade. Instead of trying to control or weed out such networks, predatory statehood has tolerated and even formed links with them in activities such as diamond smuggling, oil extraction, cross-border trade, narcotics and arms dealing, and so on (Nordstrom 2004a, 2004b; Abraham and van Schendel 2005). Instead of monopolizing organized violence, the central authority in these cases is merely one among many, albeit a legally sanctioned agent of political power, and state presence and social rootedness in the daily lives of its citizens tends to remain shallow in such situations. A good example is provided by Angola's petro-capitalism whereby the national political elite has utilized external recognition and the interests and expertise of foreign firms to continue ruling over the national territory even when their legitimacy and domestic sovereignty has been highly questionable (Reno 2004; Ferguson 2005).

Furthermore, in less dramatic situations that do not exhibit open conflict or a retreat of the central state authority, negotiation between the central government and various other authorities has remained a central feature of African statehood. In part, this derives from colonial and postcolonial forms of dispersed sovereignty; in part, it is a more recent phenomenon, reflecting policy preferences for political decentralization and institutional pluralism. Thus, many different actors are involved in the construction of statehood or, more generally, political authority in Africa. In Hagmann and Péclard's (2010: 546-7) words, these include:

state actors such as higher and lower echelon bureaucrats, political parties, customary authorities, professional associations, trade unions, neighbourhood and self-help organizations, social movements, national and international NGOs, churches and religious movements, but also guerillas, warlords, “big men”, businessmen, multinational corporations, regional and international (government) institutions and foreign states.

It should be noted that this plurality is not confined within national boundaries. The Bayartian extraversion mentioned above continues through the ‘neoliberal governmentality’ that jumps scales between local, national, regional and global and is dispersed among different agencies, some of which are formally associated with the state while others are not, as discussed by Ferguson and Gupta (2002; see also Harvey 2005; Duffield 2001; Chalfin 2010). Transnational agents like NGOs, development agencies, consultants, companies and religious leaders also play important roles in African governance, and mobilize globally circulating bodies of knowledge while doing so.

In sum, the room for manoeuvre by the central authority in African states has in many cases narrowed due to the end of Cold War superpower competition, outsourcing of governance and economic privatization. Against this background, African states, as the entities externally recognized at the time of independence, have proven surprisingly resilient. Even if regimes have come and gone and the reach of central political authorities may have shrunk in many countries, most African state territories remain the same as they were at independence. There are two sides to why this is the case: first, the continuation and new forms of informal ties and mechanisms between authorities and the people that have made possible the continuation of the state form even in times of duress and weakened capacity; and, second, the fact that the formation and fragmentation of statehood in contemporary Africa happens within a pre-existing international system of states that works towards the preservation of current states far more than their dissolution.

Many authors have examined the processual construction of statehood in situations of institutional plurality in contemporary Africa at closer range (see e.g. Munro 1996; Boone 1998; Lund and Boone 2013; Sikor and Lund 2009; Blundo 2006; Roitman 2004, 2007; Gould 2006). For example, in his study of rural Zimbabwe, a relatively early example of a processual approach to state formation in Africa, Munro (1996) notes that, to be successful, it requires that political authorities penetrate or connect with local economic and political structures in ways that

incorporate or link with local understandings. This entails the creation of a common political ground where negotiation in the broad sense can happen. With a related focus, Boone (1998) compares how the relative strength of local elites and their challenges to the central authority have contributed to the different trajectories of state formation in the groundnut basin of Senegal, southern Cote d'Ivoire and southern Ghana, while some authors (e.g. Berry 2009; Sikor and Lund 2009) have observed that struggles and negotiations over rights to property, particularly land, often play a crucial role in African local politics and the construction of authority, statehood and citizenship.

While these studies focus on rural dynamics, another interesting branch of studies of African real governance has studied the informalization of officialdom as a mechanism that facilitates the existence of statehood, albeit in a very different form from ideal notions of bureaucracy. For example, Blundo (2006) examines the relations and crossovers between the 'official' and 'unofficial', and the institutionalization of the informal in the daily practice of Senegalese petty bureaucrats. Roitman (2004, 2007) similarly examines overlaps between official and unofficial dimensions of regulatory practice, and also between licit and illicit in the Chad Basin area of West Africa. Until the early 1990s, she argues, relations of dependency and loyalty were created through taxation and salaries from the civil service and parastatals that was further redistributed through patronage relations and extended families. Since then, this link has given way to pluralization of regulatory authorities, official and unofficial, and extraction in the form of fines, confiscations, and 'taxation', revenue that does not reach state coffers but, instead, fuels military-commercial networks and, at the same time, provides a form of payment to soldiers and other state personnel. The Cameroonian and Chadian governments have not attempted to curb border traffic and smuggling because the rents and redistribution taking place through these arrangements facilitate the reproduction of state structures.

What is significant in these studies is the way they separate state capacity from the resilience of the state form and demonstrate that even when the regulatory grip of the central authority has weakened and power has increasingly been privatized, the 'statist capital' (to use Bourdieu's term) invested in official positions can still be useful for organizing various forms of real governance (see also Englebort 2009). They point out how such appropriation or 'private indirect

government', as Mbembe (2001: 67) calls it, paradoxically facilitates the continued existence of state institutions (Roitman 2004, 2007; Blundo 2006; see also Baker 1999).

In other words, even if statehood is contested, resisted, incomplete and fragmented, it is still extremely important as an aspirational ideal to many incumbent and would-be political authorities within states as well as to the international community, and a whole array of practices is geared towards its realization by a variety of agencies. All current processes of political centralization and fragmentation occur in the context of a well-established international state system. Following Jackson and Rosberg's (1986) argument of externally granted juridical sovereignty, a number of authors have explained African state survival against the odds by the tendency of the international community to prefer existing states over possible alternatives (Baker 1999; Reno 2004; Englebert 2009). This is in line with the concern to preserve order that has been prominent in the sentiments and calculations of external operators in Africa from colonial times up to the present (Reno 2009; Hansen and Stepputat 2005). After the Cold War, the ways in which African territories are incorporated into the international system changed from their being treated as proxies in superpower competition to reflecting the desire of powerful states to control threats of terrorism, migration, smuggling and so on (Duffield 2001, 2007; Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007). However, the appeal of security and predictability, from the point of view of the main players in the 'international community', has remained a constant. Incumbent regimes enjoy an advantage over insurgents in their external relations due to international treaties and regulations that favour formally recognized representatives of states, thereby providing a strong incentive to business partners and other associates to support the status quo (Reno 2004).

Thus, formal recognition as a state representative remains a source of status, authority and access to resources even in countries where the capacity of the central authority is limited. Englebert (2009: 5-7, 41-48, 59-95, 188-9) argues that the apparently paradoxical survival of African states can be explained by the utility that legal command, based on externally granted sovereignty, has for African elites and, notably, not only national elites who, as Jackson and Rosberg, Reno and others have argued, can transform the legal capital of international recognition into economic rents. In an extension of this view, Englebert argues that convertibility also applies

in local contexts where official positions remain useful tools for appropriating resources – for example by demarcating rights and defining access to land, resources and employment – and for generating rents. This, according to Englebort, explains why African state structures and the local authority of its agents remain in place even in contexts where centralized regulation and relations of patronage – for example through salaries – have ceased to operate. Local elites can be kept in check by allotting them parcels of legal sovereignty like feudal vassals, but such a form of rule is not particularly conducive to effective centralization.

A dual extraversion (Bayart 2000) can be seen at work here. The first consists of the international recognition of national elites and their associated extraversion, which contributes to the persistence of existing states as political entities and encourages competition over ruling them. The second consists of the national recognition of local elites and their associated extraversion,²⁴ which contributes to the inviolability of state territories (lack of secessions), in spite of their fragmentation, and encourages competition over which groups and actors are recognized as local representatives of the state. The latter are forms of ‘negotiating’ that take place between the domestic elites and their business or policy counterparts; such avenues lessen the need for direct mechanisms of negotiation between the national political elite and the citizenry and, in that sense, they are reminiscent of indirect rule. Neither of these processes is conducive to more effective centralization, as both offer avenues for political entrepreneurship without having to invest in new, and hence possibly riskier, institutional forms.

However, such general trends should not obscure the plurality of African state formation trajectories, including over the past couple of decades. There are instances of state weakening and pluralization of authorities in, for example, the DRC, Somalia and Central African Republic; contestation of central authority without its erosion, for example in Ivory Coast, Kenya and Zimbabwe; the continuation of institutional pluralism in the context of continued central authority, as has been the case in many countries, for example in Tanzania, Zambia and Ghana; relatively successful post-conflict centralization, for example in Mozambique, Namibia, Somaliland and Rwanda; and long-term success stories in

²⁴ Local elites, for example human rights activists or NGO leaders, can also bypass the national level and gain direct international recognition and funding.

terms of economic and institutional development, with Botswana as the most often cited example.²⁵

Botswana, in particular, stands in sharp contrast to the profile suggested by arguments about predatory states. It has demonstrated continual bureaucratic capacity and experienced economic and political success to such a degree that it has often been hailed as an African developmental or ‘development-oriented’ state (Samatar 1999; Eriksen 2011b, 2011c; Werbner 2002; Hillbom 2012; Taylor 2012). And significantly, these successes have resulted from careful domestic institution-building and negotiation between strategic elites rather than from violent competition, external intervention and aid, and without the need for broad-based revenue collection from the population through taxation. In the contemporary world, membership in the international system of states often predates many features that used to be necessary conditions of centralization. The issue now is the kind of a state that exists rather than whether a state exists or not. In the case of Botswana, external threats have been limited and broad-based taxation has not been a necessity because of the availability of considerable mineral rents. However, the political elites of Botswana, like those of any state, face the problem of dealing with current or potential competitors within the country, and building alliances and co-opting strategically positioned social groups is one way of dealing with this problem. Of course, other contributing factors are possible, like a commitment to the idea of the nation-state, which predates current politicians (e.g. Werbner 2002). The lesson to be learnt from comparing Botswana with the more familiar neopatrimonial narrative of African states is that forming alliances with strategic groups is a condition of state formation but not all alliances produce the same results; it matters whether the regime is successful in bringing the various powerful constituencies together while still prevailing over a range of different interests, formulating a broadly acceptable national interest, and pooling and distributing resources accordingly, or whether it merely navigates between various constituencies, consuming its energies and resources in trying to stay in power by buying support through selective contracts.²⁶

²⁵ Obviously, this list is far from exhaustive and overlooks overlaps between categories.

²⁶ Of course, the sustainability of Botswana’s achievements is a matter of contention, i.e. whether it is too dependent on the extraction of diamonds and whether the political elite has managed to reach out sufficiently to all social classes in order to achieve lasting legitimacy.

CONTEXTUALLY GROUNDED INSTITUTIONALIZATION AS THE BASIS OF STATEHOOD

The above review highlights the general differences between European and African state-formation trajectories, focusing mainly on characteristics shared by many or most African states such as the legacies of colonialism, the continuous significance of multiple external actors, the resilience of the state form due to continuous external recognition and the dispersed or fragmented nature of postcolonial sovereignty. Such factors have served as the basis of multiple grand explanations that focus on 'Africa' as an entity, and emphasize a single explanatory element, such as Herbst's (2000) population / territory ratio, Bayart's (2000) extraversion, Englebert's (2009) local utility of juridical sovereignty, or, generally, neopatrimonial accounts of hybrid regimes that blend patronage and bureaucracy. Additionally, for all the criticism that Mbembe (2001) levels against generalizations and reductions, it is curious how readily he speaks of Africa as an entity and largely overlooks the experiences of the more stable forms of statehood on the continent such as Ghana, Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia, South Africa and Namibia; certainly, his insights apply with greater ease to countries that have experienced more dramatic withdrawals of centralized political authority. Likewise, while Cooper (2005) first criticizes generalizations of the African state, he then advances his own general gatekeeping state thesis.

In general, there has been a partially successive, partially overlapping variety of favoured narratives of statehood in Africa, including the liberal account that proceeds from modernization to good governance and institution-building; neo-Marxist accounts of dependency or internal class dynamics and the articulation of modes of production; neopatrimonial accounts that portray hybrids of personalized relations of patronage and bureaucratic forms of rule as the essence of African statehood; and developmentalist accounts that focus on political economy and the state as a regulator of accumulation, investment and production. Different kinds of narratives have tended to cluster around particular empirical situations, even when they have been presented in ostensibly general terms: for example neopatrimonial accounts with Cameroon (e.g. Médard 1982; Bayart 1979; Mbembe 2001), and developmentalism with Botswana.

However, apart from shared characteristics that apply to all or most areas of the continent, such as being in a peripheral position in the world economy, other

characteristics that may be more specific to a particular area or a group of states (like having been part of a particular colonial empire, being former settler colonies, or oil-exporting countries) and yet others that apply only to specific countries or localities are equally important. African real governance is not either local or global and not driven by either external or internal forces but by shifting configurations of both or, more precisely, by actors that variably tap into resources and discourses of heterogeneous origins. In other words, the history of statehood in Africa – as anywhere – is a composite of various different local trajectories interlinked with broad regional shifts. Each African state has evolved through a contextually specific, unique trajectory of multiple, interacting factors. Both unifying and differentiating tendencies have been at play, resulting in a patchwork of very different political formations with some shared characteristics. Through selective readings, many African societies could be made to fit one or another of the generalizing narratives but that would not take us far in understanding Africa (Gould 2006: 922-924). Historically attentive and ethnographically informed studies of particular African societies are likely to be of more value.

The accumulated benefit of a historical and processual perspective to particular state formation trajectories is to bring forth the diversity of such experiences and highlight the character of statehood as an always provisional and precarious achievement that results from the interplay of multiple institutions which should not be treated as abstract, universal entities. They cannot be assumed prior to empirical investigation; instead, they are historically formed in unique, multicausal processes that are largely domestic although external influences can be important. Such institutionalization combines varying degrees of coercion with legitimacy generation through contextually specific bargaining, social technologies and ideological production. In this process, there may be periods of more and less intense competition, with different degrees of monopolization of the above aspects of centralization.

Current African experiences, with their intense political competition, institutional plurality and history of serious political ruptures may serve to make this point more forcefully than the apparently more stable conditions of statehood in the North (see Hagmann and Péclard 2010: 557-8), which have resulted from centuries of centralization. Instead of being a teleological given, such centralization appears as a possibility that may or may not happen through a gradual, incremental process of

institutional change and that may also involve more radical ruptures, such as armed conflicts. In other words, the trajectories of real African statehoods, with considerable deviations from the normative ideal drawn from European state formation, bring the precarious achievement of statehood clearly into focus, highlighting the way in which it is an outcome of the gradual construction of power and public authority through coercion, negotiation and subjectivation. Instead of looking for a single determinant behind state formation, it ought to be viewed as a process in which various political actors try to secure themselves and fulfil their aspirations in interaction with each other and the circumstances in which they find themselves. The construction of postcolonial statehood is not merely about how established institutions rule and regulate but, more fundamentally, about how institutions emerge and which of them manage to establish themselves as authorities in varying relationships with other possible authorities. State formation is not something that a central authority ‘does’ but rather an incremental process of structuration through which political authority gets institutionalized and de-institutionalized amongst multiple socio-political actors and relations. It is not teleological in the sense of necessarily evolving towards larger and more stable forms as it can also involve historical trajectories of evolution and dissolution, centralization and fragmentation (see also Lund 2006: 697-701). Even when such an authority emerges, it continues to face challenges and must continuously reassert itself. The continuities and discontinuities of this process vary from one country to another, as do the local, national and transnational authorities and different population groups that are involved.

CITIZENSHIP, BELONGING AND RECOGNITION

The characteristics of African state formation trajectories have had profound consequences for the people who reside in their territories. Institutions that evolved gradually in Europe, such as centralized political institutions, bureaucratic structures, security forces and money; instruments like roads, vehicles, firearms, communication technologies and agricultural implements; and biopolitical technologies of citizenship, such as assigned identities, taxation, education and health care were introduced simultaneously or at least in much tighter sequence than

in Europe. At the same time, such changes remained highly selective and much less pervasive than in the extensively governmentalized societies of the North. As Hansen and Stepputat (2006: 304) argue, 'in the colonial and postcolonial world...bio-political rationalities were always predominantly configured around maintaining public order and governing communities and collectivities rather than individual subjects'.

In this sense, colonialism formed an underside of liberal statehood that demonstrated that modern biopolitics does not merely consist of improving forms of life and enhancing their capacities but also incorporates forms of violent exclusion (Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 2006: 297; see also Mbembe 2001: 25). Foucault argued that racism was the categorising device that facilitated such negative forms of biopower (Foucault 2003: 254-263; see also Mbembe 2003: 16-17) and, indeed, the institutionalization of racial hierarchies and ethnic categories and the creation of separate juridical statuses for metropolitan citizens subject to civil or common law, and natives subject to custom and without political representation (Mamdani 1996; Mbembe 2001: 28-29; Cooper 2011), was the backbone of colonial population management.

Agamben, following Schmitt's (2005) lead, elevates to prime importance the power to decide over life and death, to draw the line between inclusion and exclusion, regarding it as the fundamental biopolitical act that separates those to be developed, improved or civilized from those who, as 'bare life', are constituted by power as an externality and hence beyond the protection of law, and may be killed or disallowed (Agamben 1998; see also Das and Poole 2004; Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 2006: 296-297, 301; Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007: 15). The 'savages' or 'natives' of the colonial imagination are good examples of the latter, but the treatment of criminals, terrorists, minorities, 'illegal' immigrants, and so on often demonstrates the continuing global relevance of this distinction. Importantly, such decisions may serve to perform and establish sovereignty and the boundaries of political community against external or internal enemies or threats. Yet, undoubtedly, modern biopolitics consists of much more than just a sovereign decision establishing the boundary between bare and political life, and Agamben has been criticized for conflating biopolitics with sovereign decision instead of accounting for the dispersal of power in modernity (Lemke 2005). However, in the colonial situation, the fundamental decision of who was to be protected and

groomed as a citizen and who was to be excluded and controlled as a subject was usually made on the basis of race and resulted in completely different biopolitical or citizenship regimes for those who found themselves on different sides of the boundary.

This was a case of dual repression where discrimination was codified in law, but law also regularly gave way to executive prerogatives, that is, the wide discretion of colonial officials. Hussain (2003) has identified a tension between an emphasis on a general normativity codified in law, on the one hand, and broad executive discretion and violence, on the other, as a fundamental and constitutive feature of British colonialism in India. The former was elevated into a marker of civilization that set colonial rule apart from precolonial modes of governance, while the latter was repeatedly deemed necessary to overcome perceived challenges on the part of local society to colonial rule (Hussain 2003: 4-6) which were intimately tied to ideas of difference and civilization:

The nineteenth-century empire, covering India, and later Africa and the Middle East, consisted of people who were not slaves but, because deemed utterly incapable of participating in their rule, were not quite free subjects either. *This empire required a new conception of sovereignty, one that was neither despotic nor democratic.* (Ibid.: 25, emphasis in the original.)

In this situation, form and procedure, rather than universality, came to denote order and rule of law: ‘Certain features of a rule of law, such as its procedural and institutional emphases, come to be viewed as particularly useful for formulating a concept of lawful government that does not necessarily entail any commitment to self-determination’ (ibid.: 134). Hussain adds that this duality has, by and large, continued into the postcolonial period (ibid.: 136-140). In short, colonial administrations operated through the mechanism of permanent exception, imitating the legal and bureaucratic orderliness of the European states but readily suspending them and resorting to broad executive powers in situations where the colonial order was seen to be threatened (Hansen and Stepputat 2005; see also Mbembe 2001: 26-29). The sovereign decision over inclusion and exclusion could take the form of legalized discrimination, decrees or situational executive discretion in ‘exceptional’ situations.

Racism, then, was a cornerstone of the colonial order and became an entrenched part of colonial culture, motivating its actors. Its perseverance was made

possible by the fact that in order to function, colonial rule did not necessarily require a legitimate political community arising from a consensual relationship with the majority of its subjects. At its root, colonial rule was not based on long-term historical negotiation with its subjects but on conquest. As Vu (2010: 161, 163-4) and Mbembe (2001: 38-39) noted, colonial societies were fragmented and lacked the kind of civil society institutions or powerful social groups that could pressure their rulers into striking bargains.

After independence, there was a transition, in principle, to universal citizenship, from exclusion to inclusion. The politics of citizenship in Africa had already begun prior to official independence, in the interplay of the efforts of colonial states to re-establish their empires after the Second World War and the demands by African educated elites, middle classes and labour for representation, civil rights and better pay and conditions (Cooper 2011). Ultimately, it proved impossible to reconcile these aspirations within imperial arrangements, which led to swift transitions to independence. The newly independent African states then embarked on nation-building projects in an attempt to unify their heterogeneous and dispersed populations and form shared identities. Such nation-building and the postcolonial citizenship that it allowed tended to be concerned with symbolic imaginings of the nation in historical narratives, figures and ceremonies, while retaining the collectivist focus of colonial population management. Instead of building robust, individuated links between the central authority and citizens through political participation, service provision or other concrete relations, citizenship has often remained minimalist, 'which essentially involves a birth certificate or a national identity card that does not have the power to invoke rights and obligations' (Roitman 2007: 188). Thus, while citizenship may officially be granted and described in terms of equal rights in the political community, it is more fruitfully examined as a process where rights, entitlements and opportunities actualize to various degrees and which touches the social existence of different kinds of citizens in different ways (see Kabeer 2005).

As Mbembe (2001: 54) argues, 'in the postcolonial African state, what passed for citizenship did not confer political rights—the right to individual representation, social rights, the right to work. Between the state and the individual were the family, the lineage, the kin, and perhaps the religious brotherhood.' Mbembe (2001: 45-47) and Roitman (2004, 2007) discuss the channels of allocation

associated with official positions, such as salary and other benefits, as mechanisms through which relations were forged between the centralized authority and selected groups of citizens and, through relations of patronage, extended to a significant number of dependants, and from the cities to the countryside. In Mbembe's (2001: 75) view, 'they gave rise to a degree of social and political cohesion—in short, underpinned a form of domination that did, it is true, involve coercion, but also involved transfers, reciprocity, and obligations'.

At the same time, the actualization of citizenship in concrete ties between the state and its citizens remained extremely heterogeneous in this patchwork of mediated relations, and the formal exclusion of colonialism often gave way to informal ways of excluding particular groups and favouring others. Throughout the postcolonial period, there have been considerable differences in the degree to which different groups have been engaged with the central authorities and included in the political community. The postcolonial state could relate to its citizens through benevolent biopolitics of improvement in schooling, agricultural extension, health programmes and so on but also through the exclusivist biopolitics of extermination, eviction or simply permitting conditions of extreme poverty and inequality (Jensen 2005, 2010; Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 2006: 302, 304; Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007: 16-17).

This might seem to contradict the supposed unity of nationalism, but actually drawing lines of inclusion and exclusion lies at its heart. Myths of the nation do not simply reflect the totality of the inhabitants of the national territory but constitute 'the people' as an ideal construct. As Dorman, Hammett and Nugent (2007: 8) argue, African 'nation-building comprised a vocabulary, and sometimes a practice, of inclusion, but both implicitly and explicitly shaped assumptions about how members of the nation should live, behave and identify themselves'. In other words, there is an inherent tendency in the quest to make territory and population cohere that simultaneously strives towards greater uniformity and excludes those groups or practices that do not fit the ideal identity of the nation.

In many African countries, the economic crisis and political changes of the 1980s and 1990s, including liberalization packages, the associated retreat of the state, and increased party political competition, often broke the existing chains of centralized accumulation and redistribution, generated economic hardships for a great number of Africans, and made competition over political authority and rights

and access to rents and productive assets such as land even more acute (Dorman, Hammett and Nugent 2007: 4-5; Mbembe 2001: 76; Geschiere 2011: 333-334; Berry 2009: 23-26; Englund 2004). At the same time, there was a renewed policy focus on citizenship and building liberal institutions. As Barry Hindess (2005: 242) argues, whereas 'liberal government of non-Western populations was once predicated on a denial of citizenship, contemporary liberal attempts to govern the people of the non-Western world are increasingly channeled through the institution of citizenship itself'. In other words, citizenship can be seen as the liberal matrix of relating to authority. If colonial regimes used to govern through exclusion from citizenship and the postcolonial regimes focused on building the collective identity of the nation and biopolitics of selective inclusion, later neoliberal forms of rule seek to govern through citizenship: through the entitlements, expectations and responsibilities that are attached to it.

However, in contrast with the ideal of equal citizenship, in reality there continue to be crucial differences in who is governed as a citizen and who is excluded – and to what extent. Transitions from authoritarian regimes, the turn to democratization and liberalization and the associated emphasis on citizenship and rights has often fuelled rather than quelled struggles over material resources, political power and belonging (Young 2007: 242; Geschiere 2011: 333-334; Berry 2009: 23-26). In this process, identities and forms of political organization and authority that stem from the bifurcated colonial and authoritarian postcolonial regimes interact with current policies and programmes that are informed by the liberal idea of civil society and neoliberal doctrines of government through freedom and self-responsibility. This has encouraged particularistic politics of belonging and recognition grounded in idioms of authenticity such as territorial origins, ethnicity, religion, language, race or tradition and has resulted in a prevalence of group-based claim-making through both non-violent and violent means (e.g. Berry 2009; Geschiere 2009 and 2011; Marshall-Fratani 2006; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2007; Awasom 2007; Raftopoulos 2007; Mbembe 2001: 76, 87; Reno 2007). The stable categories that colonial regimes froze out of previously fluid identities were inherited by postcolonial societies and appropriated as currencies in the negotiation and struggle over belonging and its benefits.

In this situation, one could expect that Africans might not to harbour strong national sentiments. However, the matter is not straightforward. As Geschiere (2011: 323) argues regarding autochthonous forms of particularistic politics:

[D]epending on the context, autochthony can become a dangerous rival to national citizenship, drastically undermining earlier ideals of national unity and the equality of all national citizens. On the other hand, it can also be seen as coinciding with national citizenship. In such cases, autochthony slogans demand a purification of citizenship and an exclusion of “strangers.”

In Englebert’s (2009: 197-198) view, the nation-state remains a highly significant frame of political action despite the persistence and revitalization of sub-national identities. Political struggles tend to be more about the conditions of truly belonging in the nation, being recognized as a citizen and gaining the benefits of this attachment than about establishing separate political communities. In such situations, nationalism reflects an exclusivist desire to justify one’s own eligibility for realizing citizenship in the form of rights and benefits such as residence, land use, employment and so forth, against that of others, rather than a positive sense of a shared community with one’s fellow citizens (*ibid.*; Dorman, Hammett and Nugent 2007). As Mamdani (2007: 22) puts it, ‘the key question in the post-colonial African context is not which rights, but whose rights. Who has the right to rights, the right to be a citizen?’

For Mamdani, ‘the failure of the nationalist project...lay in the failure to create a single citizenship based on a single substantive law’ (2007: 23). In contrast, Nyamnjoh (2007) sees universal, individuated national citizenship as the problem, criticizing the concept for its inability to deal in a just manner with flows and movements that transcend national boundaries, such as migration, and for legalistic and individualistic emphases that overlook social and cultural rights. In any case, the politics of citizenship is rife in Africa, often taking the form of group-based claims for recognition, rights and resources, irrespective of whether this trend is interpreted as reflecting the insufficient institutionalization of individual citizenship or the insufficient recognition of difference and collective rights – and the story is likely to vary according to context.

Far from being restricted to Africa, the ‘spectre of discrete identities’ (Englund 2004: 11) or the ‘culturalization of citizenship’ (Geschiere 2011: 339) has been noted as a ‘global predicament’ (Englund 2004: 11) or a ‘global conjuncture of

belonging' (Geschiere 2011: 339), often examined in terms of a politics of recognition. Political theorizations centred on recognition have primarily stemmed from challenges to liberal political theory and the universal and individuated concept of citizenship – itself a result of recognizing universal and equal humanity – proffered by multiculturalism and the demands of ethno-linguistic, religious, sexual and other minorities, and new social groups in affluent Northern liberal democracies (e.g. Taylor 1994; Fraser and Honneth 2003; Zürn 2005). These debates may be conceived more as a corrective to liberalism than as its fundamental critique, thereby questioning the inclusiveness and fairness of existing rights rather than their importance as organizing principles of political community *per se* (see Englund 2004: 7-9).

The major political philosophers of recognition, such as Taylor, Fraser, and Honneth, are all trying, in their own ways, to work out how to deal with procedural approaches to the culturalization of social struggles and associated demands of recognition. The need to be recognized has often been portrayed as a fundamental desire that is essential to social existence and the formation of identity (Taylor 1994; Honneth 2004; Corcoran 2008; Schaap 2004), a process that rests on imbuing encounters with others with meaning and value. However, for Taylor, the centrality of recognition is more specifically tied to the rise of modern individuality and politics of identity (Taylor 1994: 64-65). Either way, in one sense, recognition refers to the mutual appreciation – or lack thereof – of difference as a legitimate identity by persons and groups that share the same political space. In another sense, it may – and often does – refer to decisions taken by political authorities: to the official policies and practical decisions involved in granting special status to one or another group and to attempts to gain such a status and thus enhance the realization of citizenship – or as negative recognition in the form of systematic marginalization of certain groups. Thus it sets the conditions for demarcating national citizenship both through principles encoded in legislation and through practical politics of inclusion and exclusion. Such politics of recognition seem to offer the possibility of the expansion and deepening of recognition and social integration through the reconciliation of perspectives (Schaap 2004: 527-8) but also of misrecognition (Taylor 1994: 25-6, 36-7) and othering perceptions as devices of power, as well as the reification of collective identities (Fraser 2000: 108, 112-3; Schaap 2004: 531-7; Englund 2004: 10-12; cf. Taylor 1994: 58-64).

Fraser and Honneth disagree on whether cultural valuations and politico-economic structures of inequality can be dealt with under the single problematic of recognition. For Fraser, they ought to be treated separately, while acknowledging their empirical connections. Honneth, on the other hand, advocates subsuming issues of redistribution into a more general problematic of recognition or ‘moral grammar’ of social conflicts and rewards (Fraser and Honneth 2003; Fraser 1995, 2000, 2003; Honneth 1995, 2003, 2004; Zurn 2005; Fowler 2009). It is not necessary to become submerged in the details of this debate and its normative implications to see, first, that processes of recognition and its denial are inevitably political, contested and negotiated in everyday practices of making claims, granting rights and drafting policies; and, second, that assessments of one’s social esteem, realization of rights and economic standing are often closely connected in empirically occurring articulations of grievances and ensuing struggles for recognition and justice. Indeed, all politics in the sense of negotiating interests and status (as opposed to politics by dictate and coercion) is based on such struggles for recognition, and successful state formation trajectories are a result of such processes that have been codified in political institutions.

Thus understood, the concept of recognition captures the dynamic nature of the politics of citizenship as an active process of making and granting (or denying) claims, which requires a specific aesthetic (Corcoran 2008; Englund 2004) or cultural politics (Rutherford 2008) in order to work. However, if the emphasis on claiming rights is a recurring common denominator in various politics of recognition (see Englund 2004), the justifications and narratives for making claims as well as the objects of these claims will depend on context and may shift over time (Rutherford 2008).

Instead of rushing to construct grand theoretical statements, I feel that there is a need for detailed empirical investigations of the kinds of demands for recognition, rights and justice that are made in the contemporary world, as well as how they are made and negotiated. While it may be the case that ‘group identity [has] supplant[ed] class interest as the chief medium of political mobilization’ (Fraser 1995: 68) in the context of Northern societies, it can be argued that in Africa the relationship between class and culturalized identities or, more loosely, between economic standing and recognition, has tended to be intimate for a long time. The aforementioned reification of identities is likewise not a novelty but a practice that

goes back to colonial techniques of population management. Current forms of insecurity and deprivation, combined with economic and political liberalization, have ensured the continued and perhaps increased salience of both these tendencies. This might have important consequences: framing social struggles as identity politics in terms of the granting or denial of group rights contributes to the forming of such groups and ties the fates of persons to them, either as externally assigned or self-proclaimed identities, obliterating the multiplicity of social roles and relations through which people experience and act out their lives (see Fraser 2000: 112-3, 119-20; Englund 2004).

The focus on the construction of power and institutionalization of relationships between political authorities and citizens also serves as a caution against a too systemic application of the concepts of biopolitics and governmentality in the sense of techniques applied by a central power or international agencies to govern populations without paying sufficient attention to the actual outcomes and negotiation of policies. For example, Ellison (2009) criticizes approaches to governmentality that are overly focused on the intentions of planners and administrators when seeking to harness and regulate the conduct of subjects. As he notes, this is actually contrary to the original focus of governmentality on the ways in which forms of power operate through dispersed activities and with the active involvement of the subjects themselves. ‘Rather than the state or “neoliberalism” determining a new form of consciousness’, he argues, ‘we can better conceptualize government as a “contact point,” where governmental (and nongovernmental) policies and programs interact with techniques of the self’ (ibid.: 83).

As Das and Poole (2004) argue, marginal people, spaces and practices can interrupt the order of the state as imagined from the political centre. They come to be seen as problematic or ‘out of place’, or vice versa: things defined as problematic are rendered marginal and threatening. The policies of state agencies then become a string of responses and adjustments to such problems. The interplay between attempts at control and order by the state and the actions and reactions of ‘problematic’ groups – such as ex-combatants – or the evolving definitions of legality and illegality, formal and informal, licit and illicit (Abraham and van Schendel 2005), as well as decisions of inclusion and exclusion, can highlight the ways in which statehood and citizenship are negotiated as historically particular and socially grounded. In other words, citizenship may appear as a neoliberal technique

of rule on the one hand, but it is appropriated as a means of making claims and an object of negotiation on the other. Thus, instead of attempts to control on the part of the state being opposed by people striving towards autonomy,²⁷ the situation is often much more complex: one in which political power and aspirant members of the political community play a game of mutual authorizations (see Lund 2006a, 2006b; Sikor and Lund 2009) and dismissals. Citizenship, then, provides an arena and a language for the formation of interests and their negotiation or confrontation. In other words, instead of conceptualizing citizenship as a mere unidirectional ‘technique’ or medium of rule, it is better understood as a frame for the exercise of power but also one through which political subjects may understand and articulate their positions: a claim instead of a status, as Das (2011) puts it.

Furthermore, such negotiation should not be conceptualized as a simple duality between the state and the citizens. Both actually consist of multiple agencies or groups with their own aims and operative modes. For example, figures that can be called street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 2010: xiii; see also Blundo 2006) or frontline agents or functionaries of the state are extremely important for understanding the making of statehood in everyday practice, as they operate at the interface between central authorities and the citizens. As plans travel from central offices to the practice of implementation in the outskirts or ‘margins’ of the state, they often come to be perceived and acted out in an altered form. Similar observations have been made in ethnographic studies of development interventions, showing how the mobilization of development policies in specific localities constructs them anew and becomes instrumental in refashioning social hierarchies and local politics, and thus may have important effects on power (Ferguson 1990; Li 2007; Sivaramakrishnan 2000; Mosse 2004; Olivier de Sardan 2005).

When policies are implemented, they tend to get altered and, at the same time, influence and modify the local conditions and social relations where they are being put into play. This is not a process of top-down imposition or resistance to it by a clearly distinguishable local community but rather a process where a given governmental phenomenon – for example, joint or community forest management, as in the cases examined by Sivaramakrishnan (2000) and Li (2007), or ex-combatant reintegration, as in my case – is actually formed as a set of practices.

²⁷ As assumed by some romantically-tinged studies of resistance, a tendency criticized by Orner (1995).

What is significant, then, is how policies are appropriated, resisted and transformed; in other words how they contribute to real (as opposed to planned or intended) processes of government (in the broad sense of arranging relations between authorities and the population). This study interrogates these processes by examining the case of Namibian ex-combatant reintegration in the light of negotiations and struggles over citizenship and recognition which have both undergone intensification and taken particular forms in this specific context.

5 HISTORIES OF THE NAMIBIAN STATE, THE LIBERATION WAR AND EX- COMBATANTS

COLONIAL ORIGINS

The modern Namibian state started to coalesce during the colonial era. Prior to the advent of colonialism, the area now known as Namibia was not a single political entity. Instead, it comprised various indigenous societies with different kinds of political and economic structures and sometimes intermittent, sometimes regular relations of trade and conflict with each other and with communities beyond present-day Namibian state borders. Preceded by traders and missionaries, the Germans were the first European power to seek formal control over local populations during the late-nineteenth-century scramble for Africa. Formal colonialism sped up the integration of local societies into the world economy and generated significant changes in their internal dynamics. As Namibia was transformed into a settler colony, the ‘meta-violence of conquest’ mentioned by Bayart (2000: 222) became markedly significant. In central and southern Namibia, land was forcibly appropriated from Africans and turned into large white-owned farms. The establishment of German rule involved brutal wars of conquest that wiped out about half of the Nama and most of the Herero communities (Steinmetz and Hell 2006: 156-165). This also created a shortage of labour in a nascent economy dominated by mining and settler agriculture, leading to the establishment of a system of recruiting migrant labour from the northern native reserves into the central and southern settler areas.

The First World War brought about a change of rulers as South Africa, then a British dominion, invaded the territory and was given a mandate to govern it after the war by the League of Nations. The trends that were born during the German period were continued and systematized under the South African variant of colonial rule, which was harsh, as in many settler colonies. The administration was primarily concerned with neutralizing the threat posed by the native population and with

ensuring the utility of the land. These imperatives provided for a sharply ‘bifurcated’ (Mamdani 1996) and strongly policed state where white Namibians were treated as individual citizens before the law while the Africans were turned into ‘natives’ subject to ‘custom’, and their movements, residence, employment and political rights were strictly restricted. This entailed forced removals, migrant labour (Gordon 1977; Clarence-Smith and Moorsom 1977; Moorsom 1989; Voipio 1981), as well as pass (Winterfeldt 2002) and vagrancy laws (Gordon 1998). Society was deeply divided along racial lines in the form of residential and occupational segregation, education, land ownership and political rights (Silvester, Wallace and Hayes 1998). Most of central and southern Namibia made up the so-called Police Zone that was designated for white residence while the Africans were assigned native reserves, later to be called homelands, where they eked out a living from subsistence agriculture and semi-forced migrant labour in white-owned farms, mines and enterprises. The reserves were governed indirectly through chiefs and headmen relying on ‘customary’ law (cf. Mamdani 2007: 19). The economic and political changes brought about by colonialism also set in motion social and cultural transformations that were further encouraged by the efforts of missionaries and colonial officials to root out ‘uncivilized’ and ‘unorderly’ practices and promote self-improvement through education, work and care of one’s self and home.²⁸

The combination of procedural legality and executive discretion, noted by Hussain (2003: 134, 136-40) as a central feature of colonial administration, is easily identifiable in the context of South Africa and South West Africa under white minority rule; there were no pretensions to democracy or equality, and political authority was justified by formal rules and procedures, and wide emergency provisions. A particular rule of law existed as a legitimating technology of selective and politically purposeful governance (although over time, as resistance to South African rule grew, the law also emerged as a relatively autonomous sphere that could be used to challenge the regime). Race played a major role in the division of people into citizens and subjects, but to a degree it would interact with other markers of ‘civilization’ and difference (Hussain 2003: 29-30).

²⁸ See inter alia McKittrick 2002; Gordon 1998; Melber 2000; Wallace 2002; as well as Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1997 on the South African context.

THE LIBERATION WAR AND SWAPO IN EXILE

While there were occasional incidents of resistance to German and South African rule throughout the colonial period, it was only after the Second World War that a national consciousness evolved among Namibians, resulting in full-fledged nationalism by the late 1950s (Emmett 1999). The South West Africa People's Organization (Swapo) soon emerged as the leading nationalist movement, sidelining others such as the predominantly urban and Herero-based South West Africa National Union (SWANU). Swapo originally began by campaigning for Ovambo migrant workers' rights, although the nascent urbanized intellectual elite (mostly with Ovambo roots) played a significant role in its leadership and mobilization (see e.g. Tapscott 2001: 309; Töttemeyer 1978). However, the organization soon broadened its objectives to encompass national liberation and explicitly denounced ethnic factionalism. From the early 1960s Swapo increasingly operated in exile and, after unsuccessful attempts to reach a peaceful solution, it resorted to armed struggle in 1966. In exile, Swapo's most important supporters included the Eastern European countries and Cuba, and in Africa, Angola, Tanzania and Zambia. It obtained military support from the socialist bloc, had cooperation with other Southern African liberation movements, and relied on the Tanzanian, Zambian and Angolan governments to accommodate its refugees and guerrillas and help quell internal crises. However, Swapo also received non-military assistance from various other countries as well as from solidarity movements in the West.

The liberation war led to the militarization of Namibian society. With the north turned into a theatre of war, tens of thousands of young Namibians, mainly from Ovamboland or Oshiwambo-speakers from towns in other parts of the country, joined Swapo in exile in the 1970s and 1980s. They lived in refugee settlements, participated in the war in the ranks of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) or studied in various institutions around the world. Tens of thousands of Namibians were also recruited into the South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF) and paramilitary police unit Koevoet, the South African surrogate forces in Namibia. Apart from the highest level of command, both consisted of Namibians.

Swapo had begun military training for its exiled cadres in 1962, four years before the first clashes took place with the South African forces. Initially, training took place in Egypt, Ghana, Algeria, Tanzania and the Soviet Union on a very

modest scale though, after 1965, some fighters were also trained in China and North Korea. Most, however, were trained in Africa (Katjavivi 1986: 265; Soggot 1986: 29). Swapo's own first training camp was established in the 1960s in Kongwa, Tanzania, though it gradually moved most of its exile organization to Zambia in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A new reception and training centre called Oshatotwa was established in south-western Zambia after the exodus of 1974 and remained the major site of Swapo's military training until 1978. Thereafter, most of the training took place in camps near Lubango in Angola (where Swapo's Defence Headquarters had been re-sited), especially at the Tobias Hainyeko training centre (Saul and Leys 1995: 46, 54). Training also continued in Eastern Europe and Tanzania.

Inside Namibia, resistance to colonialism developed into a steady force by the early 1970s, with migrant workers and the youth becoming increasingly militant (Soggot 1986: 42-49, 56-60, 76-85, 125-130; Leys and Saul 1995b: 70-73, 76-78); there were, however, significant regional differences. Encounters with colonial practices and the degree of support for Swapo varied in different parts of the country. Contrary to Swapo's nationalist rhetoric, multiple divisions opened up within Namibian society during the many decades of the war. They appeared between apartheid-designated black 'homelands' and settler areas, between urban and rural areas, between the educated and uneducated (especially within the liberation movement), between the young and the old, and last but not least, along ethnic lines (Brown 1995; Leys and Saul 1995a, 1995b; Tapscott 1995).

Despite Swapo's avowed anti-tribalist character, Oshiwambo-speakers have always constituted its main source of support and, in Ovamboland, when broad-based dissatisfaction with the colonial power became apparent from the 1960s, Swapo grew into virtually the only visible and accepted political movement. 'The struggle' became a pervasive condition of local social relations, with churches and secondary schools comprising important forums for resistance (Soggot 1986; Cliffe et al. 1994; Metsola 2001). From 1972 onwards and especially after 1974, the repressive presence of South Africa's military and paramilitary forces was most heavily felt in the region.

Militarily, the balance of power was always too much against Swapo for it to permanently occupy parts of Namibia and establish so-called liberated areas. Still, from the mid-1970s, the guerrillas operated continuously within Namibia, penetrating as far as the central parts of the country. From the late 1970s until the

beginning of the 1980s, they managed, with the help of the local people, to establish a permanent presence in Ovamboland, operating from bases close to the border on the Angolan side. Between 1978 and 1980 they even prevented the South African Defence Force from patrolling in parts of Ovamboland. In the mode of classic guerrilla warfare, they mobilized as well as controlled the local population, depending on civilian support for food, shelter and information. From the beginning of the 1980s, however, it was once again to become more difficult for the guerrillas to operate at will as a result of South Africa extending its military operations to southern Angola on a more or less permanent basis, attacking PLAN bases and disrupting its logistic network.²⁹

According to Swapo and its sympathizers, the civilians mostly supported the guerrillas voluntarily.³⁰ They were willing to help because they considered the mostly Ovambo guerrillas as members of the same community, as their sons (and daughters) or brothers (and sisters), and widely shared their idea of the undesirability of colonial occupation. Yet even Ovamboland did not simply stand unified against South African rule. The members of the ‘homeland’ authorities and local military and paramilitary units, as well as a considerable number of their family members, stood to gain directly from the occupation. The 101 Battalion of the SWATF, for example, was an Ovambo battalion. Likewise, Koevoet was composed of Ovambos, many of whom were PLAN combatants who were captured and ‘turned’ to change sides. Furthermore, South African counterinsurgency measures sought to prevent civilians from supporting the guerrillas through a mixture of terror and persuasion,³¹ while the war situation was also used to settle parochial scores – for instance by accusing people of collaborating with the South Africans.³² Still, it seems justified to argue that a considerable majority of the people

²⁹ Brown (1995: 23-32); Cliffe et al. (1994: 25-30); Katjavivi (1986: 264-265, 275, 284-286); Liberation Support Movement (1973: 13-17). Contemporary liberationist accounts often exaggerated the extent of PLAN presence, speaking of relatively large permanent military bases inside Namibia. See Swapo (1981: 259, 262-263); Kiljunen (1981:158-159).

³⁰ See e.g. Soggot (1986: 179-180, 219-220); Soiri (1996: 68-69); Brown (1995:29); Metsola (2001).

³¹ Such measures combined violence and welfare, as South African military personnel served as ‘teachers, veterinarians, agricultural advisors and technicals, dentists, doctors, psychiatrists, nature conservationists, and social workers’ (Seegers 1997: 158; quoted in Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007: 29). In the late 1970s through the 1980s, South Africa also sought to legitimate its rule by some improvements in the rights and conditions of the African population as well as a semblance of political representation.

³² Groth quotes a northern Namibian churchman who told him in 1985 that ‘we live between two fires. Either you side with the South Africans or with SWAPO. If SWAPO men come at night, asking

of Ovamboland supported Swapo for one reason or another though, in this context, the boundary between voluntary and involuntary is more blurred than one might initially think. It may well be that in the late 1970s when the guerrillas moved around extensively in Ovamboland, participation in the struggle in one way or another became something that was expected of young people, and joining the liberation army a matter of ‘being drafted’ (Metsola 2001). In this atmosphere, it would have been almost unthinkable not to participate in some way, even without direct coercion.

In the south, while people had more contact with the everyday relations and practices of the colonial administration and its representatives, repression was not as severe as in the north. Furthermore, Swapo was not nearly as dominant in politics and the South African regime eagerly cultivated divisions between different groups, *inter alia* by actively recruiting young men from the central and southern parts of the country into its ethnic battalions in the SWATF. In the early 1980s, compulsory conscription was introduced in the south. No doubt, the South Africans intended these processes to support the principle of divide and rule, but over time they led to enduring and self-sustaining divisions along ethnic lines.³³ Groups other than the Ovambo pursued agendas of their own that were not simply co-opted by the South African regime – despite often being portrayed as such by Swapo – but, rather, were attempts to find an alternative political space between colonial power and potential Swapo rule. There was fear, whether justified or not, of Ovambo dominance if Swapo came to power.

In exile, Swapo evolved into an authoritarian organization, in which seniority and hierarchy could not be openly questioned, which is not surprising in a prolonged military situation.³⁴ Officially, there was to be internal democracy and gender

for help, and you don’t help them, then that means you’re on the South African side, and you may have to pay with your life’ (Groth 1995: 28). This quotation reveals that even if civilians by and large sympathized with the guerrillas’ cause, they also had to help them to avoid being labeled collaborators and traitors. See also Akawa (2014: 43-44).

³³ See e.g., Gewald (2004) for a detailed microhistory of spontaneous conflict breaking out along such lines.

³⁴ My account of Swapo’s internal politics and crises is based on Dreyer (1994: 78-81, 86-104, 112-116); Serfontein (1976: 157; 342-350); Katjavivi (1986: 288-301, 396-401); Katjavivi (1988: 105-109); Leys and Saul (1994); Saul and Leys (1995, 2003a, 2003b); Dobell (1998: 47-51, 53-55); Pütz, von Egidy and Caplan (1990: 258-259, 290); Groth (1995); Trehwela (2009: 140–224); Cliffe et al. (1994); Human Rights Watch (1992); Peltola (1995). Additionally, there are many accounts produced by Swapo detainees and dissidents themselves. See Beukes, Beukes and Beukes (1986); *Breaking the*

equality, but in practice the old took precedence over the young and men over women. In practice, this did not weed out internal politics but ensured that they either took place behind closed doors or turned into crises. Officially, Swapo also downplayed the existence of ethnic divisions though, implicitly, it admitted their salience by attending to ethnic balance in its leadership.

The first major crisis within Swapo in exile occurred in the mid-1970s after thousands of young Namibians flooded into exile, many of them student activists and secondary school students, thereby straining the capacities of the movement. At the same time, the collapse of Portuguese colonialism in Angola created the possibility of opening up a new major front along the border between Namibia and Angola. The efforts made by Swapo towards this end drew it into closer cooperation with UNITA, MPLA's rival claimant to governmental status in Angola, although a development that would counter this cooperation was concurrently taking place. Under military and economic pressure from South Africa and alarmed by the prospect of a Soviet-backed, ostensibly Marxist MPLA government in Angola, Zambian President, Kenneth Kaunda, agreed with the South African Prime Minister, John Vorster, that Zambia would pressurize Swapo to cease running its military activities from Zambian soil; meanwhile, South Africa started to support UNITA in the Angolan civil war. From the point of view of Swapo's leadership, the situation was uncertain, something that was further aggravated by the fact that, as Saul and Leys (1995: 47) observe, it was impossible to foretell the outcome of the MPLA/UNITA conflict. On the ground, the situation led to Swapo combatants finding their UNITA allies now collaborating with their enemy, the South Africans.

It was in this context that voices of dissatisfaction arose within the movement. Among the newcomers there were Swapo Youth League activists who, together with a number of combatants, demanded that a congress be convened and the movement's organization be restructured. There were two sides to their demands: greater democracy, and increased efficiency in waging the war. Military activities were almost dormant and there were complaints about high-handed and undemocratic leadership practices, including rumours about corruption. Instead of

Wall of Silence Movement (1997); Shipanga (1989); Leys and Brown (2005: 63–85, 111–124); Nathanael (2002).

These crises were far from unique. Many Southern African liberation movements, including the ANC of South Africa, encountered largely similar conditions in exile and had their own purges; for critical analyses of the ANC, see Ellis (1994); Ellis and Sechaba (1992); Trehwela (2009: 2–138).

giving way to the demands, the exile leadership requested help from the Zambian authorities who subsequently intervened. The leaders of the 'rebellion' were detained and many guerrillas 'rehabilitated' in a camp in Mboroma.³⁵

Another major crisis started in the early 1980s and lasted until the repatriation of exiles in 1989–90. Hundreds, if not thousands, of exiled Namibians were arrested and kept in dugout dungeons in Angola in a purge of suspected infiltrators by an increasingly powerful security wing that had been formed in 1980 or 1981 (Leys and Saul 1994: 145; Saul and Leys 1995: 55-56).³⁶ Many were tortured and killed. This created an atmosphere of fear throughout the movement. Arrests disproportionately targeted southerners, *mbwitis* (people of Ovambo origin raised outside Ovamboland) and educated people. By contrast, the movement's armed wing and security service were controlled by people of Kwanyama³⁷ origin.

THE NAMIBIAN STATE AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The Namibian independence war came to an end in 1989, more due to diplomatic efforts, the warming up of the Cold War and the successes of Cuban and Angolan forces against South Africa in Angola than to Swapo's armed struggle (Cliffé et al. 1994; Dreyer 1994; Dobell 1998; Brown 1995). The fighting forces were demobilized and the transition to independence started. Constituent Assembly elections in preparation for independence were held in 1989. Swapo gained 57% of the vote; the South African-supported DTA (Democratic Turnhalle Alliance) received 29%; while the rest were divided between eight smaller parties. Swapo became the ruling party and its leaders, returning from exile, largely formed the new

³⁵ According to Leys and Saul (1994: 138) the number of those arrested when the crisis came to a head was almost 2,000, a considerable proportion of the movement's exiled members at that time. Pütz, von Egidy and Caplan (1990: 258, 290) give similar numbers; Shipanga (1989: 133) speaks of about 1,500; Groth's (1995: 57) figure is over a thousand; while Katjavivi (1988: 107), in a pro-Swapo account, suggests 1,000 at most. According to Groth (1995: 61) and Leys and Saul (1994), about 200 of the Mboroma detainees resigned from Swapo, while the rest were 'rehabilitated' in Mboroma and later moved to Nyango and to Angola. Katjavivi (1988: 107) speaks of 'a small number' who left Swapo and nearly 600 who were resettled in Nyango. According to him (Katjavivi 1986: 300), the Mboroma camp was dissolved by the end of 1977.

³⁶ According to Groth (1995: 100) the security wing was formed in 1983, which seems unlikely.

³⁷ The Kwanyamas are the largest subgroup among the Ovambo. Their precolonial territory was cut in half when the boundary between Namibia and Angola was established but connections over the border have remained strong up to the present.

political elite of independent Namibia. Significantly, however, Swapo did not attain the two-thirds majority required to write the constitution on its own and it was drafted by the Constituent Assembly on the basis of principles accepted by the United Nations Security Council in 1982. The constitution provides for representative democracy, the separation of powers and an extensive set of citizens' rights and freedoms.

While the regime change paved the way for major reforms in government, security structures, judiciary, schooling and health, there were also important continuities from the previous regime, for instance in the personnel, structures and operating rationalities of these institutions, based on accumulated institutional memory and practices. The jobs of civil servants of the previous regime were guaranteed, unless they voluntarily wanted to vacate them. Considerable pre-independence legislation remained in place, although there has been a gradual process of legal reform. The ethnically organized 'homeland' administrations were abolished and new regional and local government institutions established in their place. However, customary law has been officially recognized (Republic of Namibia n.d., article 66) and although it is secondary to the Constitution or any other statutory law (*ibid.*; see also Hinz 1998a: 1), 'traditional' authorities are influential in the former homelands (Hinz 1998b; see also Mamdani 2007: 19).

Over its 25 years of independence, Namibia has variously been hailed as an African democratic success story or criticized for Swapo's authoritarian domination. Both readings are equally possible. The country has enjoyed enduring stability; opposition parties have been allowed to exist and campaign; elections have regularly been declared free and fair by international observers; the media enjoy considerable freedom; there is room for private enterprise; and a policy of national reconciliation was adopted after independence to heal the wounds of the war. The Namibian economy is relatively strong. Namibia is a middle-income country that has specialized in the commercial production of minerals and agricultural products. The steady flow of revenue from taxing trade, domestic consumption corporate incomes and a relatively small base of individual taxpayers has enabled the Namibian state to

spend considerable amounts on infrastructure development and service delivery in previously neglected areas.³⁸

At the same time, despite its multiparty framework Namibia is, practically, dominated by Swapo as the party has repeatedly scored overwhelming victories in general elections, largely due to its liberation credentials. Furthermore, threats from Swapo politicians against the opposition, critical media and NGOs and white landowners, as well as informal forms of discrimination, occasional harassment and violence against people whom the ruling party or state representatives have considered problematic have been reported from time to time. The three-fourths majority in the Parliament that Swapo has enjoyed since 1994 has meant that in practice most important political decisions are made within the structures of the ruling party and rubber-stamped in national political institutions (Melber 2014, 2003a, 2003b). Despite this dominance, Swapo has at times been clearly worried about political challenges from opposition parties. This has been most clearly visible in connection with the establishment of two opposition parties, the Congress of Democrats (CoD) and the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), both founded by politicians who split from Swapo. Despite formal commitment to constitutional principles, there have been regular utterances from within the ruling party that reveal uneasiness with political pluralism and a constitutional order. In the view of some prominent Swapo members the latter were not perfectly voluntary but a condition of independence forced upon Swapo by the major Western powers that were involved in negotiating the path to Namibian independence (Dobell 1998). Faced with a broad range of criticisms from the opposition, the media and NGOs, Swapo representatives often respond by labelling the critics as a unified bloc of imperialist forces that aim to compromise Namibia's popular sovereignty. It is a rhetoric that recasts current debates in the polarized language of the liberation struggle.³⁹

Economically, Namibia also remains one of the most polarized countries in the world.⁴⁰ After independence the new regime found itself faced with the problems

³⁸ According to government sources, the total revenue in 2012-13 was close to 38 billion N\$. The biggest shares of it were contributed by customs and excise (13.8 billion N\$), individual income tax (8.9 billion N\$), value added tax (6.4 billion N\$) and company taxes (5 billion N\$) (Republic of Namibia 2014: 8-22).

³⁹ For just one example, see 'Opposition court action against election results unpatriotic: Swapo,' *The Namibian* 29 January 2010.

⁴⁰ Namibia's GINI coefficient is currently estimated at 59.7. There has been improvement, but this is still one of the highest figures in the world (*CIA World Factbook*,

of reconciliation and preventing capital flight. These were obviously legitimate concerns but dealing with them has allowed the continuation of earlier, highly unequal socioeconomic relations which, prior to independence, largely followed a racial logic. Since independence, the composition of the elite has become more heterogeneous: a new black politico-economic elite, mostly with Swapo credentials, has emerged alongside the old white elite. This has had the effect of converting political capital into economic advantage as influential government positions with considerable side benefits as well as mining concessions, fishing quotas, and land or cheap farming loans have been consistently allocated to the 'previously disadvantaged' (Melber 2014, 2007, 2005; Winterfeldt 2007; Jauch 2007; Tapscott 2001; Dubresson and Graefe 2001; Rakner 2001). The African majority mostly remain poor, surviving on poorly paid work, subsistence agriculture and informal economic activity, as there have been no major changes in the ownership of land or other productive assets (Kaapama 2007). Unsurprisingly, nepotism, favouritism, corruption and mismanagement are recurring topics in the media and in people's conversations.

Namibia, then, sits rather uneasily with conventional, generalizing narratives of African statehood and, as Friedman (2011: 47) notes, tends to be absent from them, as is the entire Southern African region. While Botswana and South Africa are often noted as exceptions, for different reasons, and Zimbabwe has achieved notoriety because of its fast-track land reform, forced removals of squatters and white farmers, and electoral violence, Namibia might as well have broken off into the Atlantic. It hardly conforms to the narrative of state failure so prominent in analyses of Africa. The liberal and neopatrimonial readings of the Namibian state, outlined above, appear selective and partial, locked in an unrewarding exchange of talking past each other. Indeed, for the purposes of trying to understand the construction of authority and citizenship in Namibia it is less fruitful to try to fit the country into such models than to examine the particular institutional assemblage that makes up the Namibian state.

Many important features of this assemblage stem from Namibia's background as a settler colony and from its long liberation war. In these respects, there are numerous overlaps with other countries in the Southern African region.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wa.html>, accessed 18 September 2014; World Bank 2009).

Like South Africa and Zimbabwe, Namibia differs from most other African states in terms of its institutional strength and reach (Lodge 1998). The economic and security demands of the settler population led to relatively efficient administrative structures. For the 'natives', this meant land and cattle dispossession, expulsions and a general disruption of pre-existing social structures, particularly in the areas taken over for white resettlement. Settler industry and agriculture in South Africa and neighbouring territories propelled a system of migrant labour that extended throughout the Southern African region. Such changes also laid a foundation for the emergence of broad-based resistance (with considerable regional differences within the country). In other words, unlike in many other African countries, the violent centralization often stressed in accounts of European state formation also occurred in Namibia. However, its results were not monolithic. On the contrary, the ensuing form of statehood was sharply bifurcated between settlers and natives, and also produced divisions between the multiple 'tribes' in the territory, a colonial balkanization that has contributed to the continued salience of ethnic and other differences. Nor was the settler state ever uncontested but, rather, it required continuous reassertion through violence to counter the multiple and diverse moments and movements of dissent that eventually culminated in the liberation war.

The strong administrative and legal apparatus created by the militarized settler state was inherited by the independent Namibian state. In contrast to the 'limited statehood' experience (Hagmann and Péclard 2010: 541; see also Mbembe 2001) associated with 'the end of post-coloniality' (Young 2004) in many African countries in the 1990s and 2000s, Namibian state agencies have continued to perform their core functions relatively well and have had comparatively unquestioned, if uneven, reach and dominance over the national territory and the population. Together with the discourse and institutions of liberal democracy, the violent history of settler colonialism and liberation warfare has combined into a heterogeneous field of power in which multiple forms of authority that arise from different constituencies and histories overlap. Apart from Swapo's charismatic-authoritarian tendencies, arising from its liberationist history (and possibly from other sources as well, such as the colonial notion of customary authority), one should note the genuine professionalism and 'legal-rational' ideals of many public servants as well as the continuing significance of 'traditional' authorities. The constitutional provision of rights, their various spokespersons in the NGOs and the

press, and the adoption of the discourse of rights in public debates also enter into the constitution of the political field.

Still, the ‘post-liberationist’ (Dorman 2006; see also Melber 2003a; Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007) tendencies of Swapo in power are undoubtedly important. The violence of occupation and colonial rule, together with a prolonged liberation war, led to reimagining society along one major fault line between South African minority rule and majority resistance, thus crafting a sense of Namibia and its people as an entity and providing a further potential basis for state formation. In this respect, Namibia shares many characteristics with Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique and South Africa. These include an emergence from protracted struggles that took on features of civil war; a former liberation movement transforming itself into a dominant party in a multiparty framework; and the way in which divisions and rhetoric inherited from war-time are recycled in the political imagination (Jensen 2001). In this connection, Buur, Jensen and Stepputat (2007: 13, 32) refer to ‘a political ethos of monism that makes the separation between state, party and government hard to identify’. Not surprisingly, this tendency has remained a persistent feature of Swapo’s political culture since independence (Melber 2014, 2003a, 2003b; Tapscott 2001: 319-321; Leys and Saul 1994; Leys and Saul eds. 1995; Dobell 1998; Lamb 2007), with liberationist credentials serving as a criterion for full citizenship and entitlement to political voice.⁴¹

Against the background of socioeconomic inequality, a long history of organized violence, the transition from one political regime to another, instability in many other African countries, and the importance of controlling the state apparatus in order to secure resources, it is hardly surprising that the Swapo government has consistently paid considerable attention to the maintenance of order and stability. The consolidation and extension of state sovereignty in general and the power of the current regime in particular have been central concerns. Legitimacy for this bid is drawn from the history of liberation, the unquestionably strong support Swapo still enjoys and its claim to be an indispensable agent of national development. Significantly, political competition is often seen as a threat to order, stability and development, rather than a part of it.

⁴¹ While the idea of ‘post-liberation’ certainly captures some of the specificity of the regimes that emerged out of liberation wars, one has to be careful not to fall in the trap of normatively laden, simplistic comparisons with ‘advanced’ liberal (or imagined popular) democracies (on the latter, see e.g. Saul (1997)).

The efforts to extend the power of the post-independence regime have taken various forms: one has been to take over state security apparatuses and replace their personnel as well as expanding their reach in the border and frontier areas of state territory. Others include the establishment of new regional and local authorities, a consistent drive to increase service provision in previously neglected areas,⁴² strategic provision of public employment,⁴³ selective recognition of traditional authorities, and constant production of nationalist historical imagery. Namibian authorities are much more able than those in many other African states to engage in service delivery and provision of welfare: for example, a universal old-age pension. Such material flows between the state and the citizens contribute to public understandings of the state as a provider and, thus, generate institutionalized connections or a ‘contract’ between the central authority and the citizens, thereby constructing legitimacy.⁴⁴

These broad concerns with consolidating power, together with the particular history of Swapo returnees, the challenges that life in the new liberal democratic state has posed for them, and their long-standing close relationship with the new political elite provide the broad background that has facilitated the emergence of Swapo ex-combatants as a centrally positioned group in Namibian politics after independence. I will now turn to a more specific discussion of how this group came into existence by examining the details of exile life during the liberation war.

FROM LIFE IN EXILE TO EX-COMBATANTS

To properly understand the relationships between Swapo and its ex-combatants or veterans after independence, it is essential look into the peculiar universe that

⁴² It is a bone of contention in public discussions whether the north-central regions are favoured in this respect over other former homelands.

⁴³ Examples include the growth of public service personnel due to the practice of recruiting civil servants loyal to the new regime and broad-based ex-combatant employment, as well as programs such as the Targeted Intervention Programme for Employment and Economic Growth (Tipeeg), begun in 2011, that aims to provide jobs to ‘marginal groups’ such as women and young people.

⁴⁴ See MacLean (2011), Ferguson (2007) as well as Friedman’s (2011) account of paternalist expectations as a central principle in imagining the Namibian state in the Kunene region.

comprised life in exile.⁴⁵ Swapo was granted the status of being ‘the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people’ by the United Nations; in other words, a government in the making. While Swapo was heavily dependent on external assistance, Namibians in exile were considered to belong to Swapo and Swapo administered the exile population single-handedly. Nearly all exiled Namibians lived under Swapo’s structures and command, whether in the refugee camps (called health and education centres), in PLAN units or as students in various countries around the world. A number of practices were aimed at transforming the incoming exiles into loyal cadres through military training, political and other education as well as via the hierarchies and regulations governing daily life in the camps.⁴⁶

The majority of the exiles, including most of the women, lived in the civilian camps in Angola and Zambia, or served in the PLAN, while some studied at the United Nations Institute for Namibia in Lusaka or elsewhere.⁴⁷ The first civilian settlement was established near Lusaka in 1973 and came to be known as the Old Farm. In 1975 it was replaced by Nyango, near Senanga, as the major settlement in Zambia. After the initial difficulties of the mid-1970s, referred to above, Swapo established an amicable relationship with Angola’s MPLA government and moved

⁴⁵ In this section, I rely largely on the findings of my earlier study (Metsola 2001) that focused extensively on exile history as experienced by the exiles. For similar findings, see Williams (2009); Akawa (2014).

⁴⁶ Indeed, many former exiles with whom I have discussed the subject explicitly refused to be labelled refugees, a term that they tended to associate with passive, helpless objects of others’ interventions. In their own eyes they were committed freedom fighters waging the liberation struggle on the multiple ‘fronts’ of military action, diplomacy and education.

⁴⁷ Before independence, Swapo grossly exaggerated the number of Namibians under its care in exile, probably to maximize its diplomatic leverage and the humanitarian support it received. This was revealed during the transition period when nearly all exiles returned to Namibia. There is no exact information about how many died or were born in exile. Pütz, von Egidy and Caplan (1990: 259) estimate the combined casualties of both sides in the Namibian war at over 1,000 annually at least since 1976/77, the majority being on Swapo’s side: roughly, this would put the figure in the region of 10,000 Swapo casualties or more. Groth estimates that the number of Namibians who died in exile was ‘over 11,000’, including not only those who died in the war but also those who died in other situations (Groth 1995: 37). Swapo’s official record puts the number of those who died in exile at 7,792 (Swapo Party 1996, cited in Williams 2009: vii), a figure that has been criticized for omissions (Williams 2009: vii). Together, the figures for returnees and the deceased would indicate a total of about 60,000 exiles over time.

PLAN forces were demobilized before repatriation and returned as civilians though some remained in Angola as a reserve until late 1989. For these reasons, it is not known how many of the returnees had been combatants at some point of their exile career. Sources give widely disparate numbers ranging from around 9,000 to around 30,000, at least partly depending on how ‘ex-PLAN-combatant’ is defined (Colletta et al. 1996: 131-132; Preston 1997: 455; Gleichmann 1994a: 136). According to Brown (1995), PLAN’s strength never exceeded 15,000 guerrillas.

both its civilian and military headquarters as well as most of its civilian population to Angola. There, Namibians were initially settled at a number of more or less permanent settlements, including Cassinga and Jamba in the southern part of the country. After the destruction of Cassinga by the South African military in 1978,⁴⁸ however, Kwanza Sul in central Angola became the major centre as Swapo decided to move its civilian population further away from the Namibian border.⁴⁹ The settlement covered a wide area and consisted of various camps that concentrated on specific duties, separated by uninhabited spaces consisting, for example, of agricultural land.

Overall, Swapo managed to establish an impressive infrastructure of civilian and military settlements and logistics in Angola and Zambia, which could provide sufficient food and shelter to the exiles (Katjavivi 1986: 307-311; Mbamba 1979: 6-8, 11-29; Hishongwa 1983: 58-66). The standard of housing seems to have been extremely modest in the beginning,⁵⁰ but there were some improvements over the years. People lived in military tents, barracks, self-built huts and later even permanent houses. At the camps, children were schooled up to junior secondary level, adults were given school education and vocational training, and the injured and the sick were taken care of. These efforts were made easier by the steady flow of people returning from training abroad and putting their newly acquired skills into the service of the movement. As Swapo had a special status in the eyes of the United Nations due to being a former League of Nations mandate, it also enjoyed more attention and resources than many other liberation movements. Apart from the

⁴⁸ Hundreds of Namibians were killed in the attack on Cassinga, and the Cassinga massacre, as it came to be called, emerged as a symbolically charged event in Swapo's history of liberation, commemorated yearly on the date of the attack.

⁴⁹ Estimates of the population of Kwanza Sul vary. After the exiles' return, it emerged that Swapo's figures were exaggerated. Leys and Saul put the figure at 35,000, counting from their estimate of a little over 50,000 returnees (Saul and Leys 1995: 54, 63-64). One of my interviewees, who worked as the chief administrator of the settlement from the mid-1980s until the repatriation of the exiles, spoke of a population of 30,000-40,000. On the other hand, Peltola (1995: 146), who worked in Kwanza Sul on several occasions in the early and mid-1980s, gives an estimate as low as 11,000-15,000. In my mind, the estimate of 35,000 seems too high, even if one starts from the estimated total of 60,000 exiles (see note 47), as there were about 10,000 serving in the military, a few thousand in Zambia, a few thousand who were secondary school students or in further education in Cuba and various other countries and a few thousand elsewhere in Angola, for example in Ndalatando, Viana transit camp, and Luanda. Meanwhile, the Namibians who died in exile did not, of course, suddenly pass away at the end of the war but gradually during the exile period. Furthermore, there were about 2,000 exiled Namibians, mostly SWANU members or defectors from Swapo who lived in Botswana, Zambia and, in smaller numbers, in various other countries.

⁵⁰ This is confirmed by Groth (1995: 38) who visited the Old Farm settlement in August 1975.

practical importance of improvements in the standard of living, the collective effort of building huts, hospitals, bridges and drainage systems, cutting trees and cultivating the land, collecting firewood and water, studying, teaching, nursing and taking care of children appears prominently in the accounts of former exiles as hard work that signals their contributions to 'the struggle' (Metsola 2001).

Life in exile was, for the most part, strongly communal. Both in the civilian settlements and in the military, the exiles lived together and were, to a large extent, sealed off from the local populations.⁵¹ Families cohabited if their members happened to live in the same camp though usually this was not the case: family members were mostly separated by their different duties. Furthermore, many of the exiles were unmarried. Thus, people often lived without close relatives and, according to many, were like a large extended family. Almost everything was done together: eating, schooling, military activities and other major routines. Cultural and sports activities were also organized. These arrangements were obviously meant to address the immediate need of efficiently managing the increased exile population and catering to their day-to-day requirements. However, apart from this practical purpose, they also worked towards building loyalty to the movement and its relations and practices of power, as well as focusing the energy and expectations of the rank and file to deal with the multiple problems associated with life in exile: material shortages, lack of meaningful engagement, instability of close relationships, the danger of enemy attacks or internal persecution, and the general frustration of waiting for repatriation.⁵² Intentionally and unintentionally, the practices of exile produced a particular normative order and economy of time and space among the exiles.⁵³

⁵¹ I also heard from a close observer that the exiles' relationship with the Angolans, at least in Kwanza Sul, was reserved and mostly concentrated on trading. Peltola (1995: 145-146) confirms these points, adding that trading was officially forbidden.

⁵² Here I rely on personal communication and critical secondary sources. The psychological effects of some of these and similar problems were charted by Shisana and Celentano (1985, 1987).

⁵³ The intentionality of this 'civilizing' mission is pointed out by the following quotation, according to which the purpose of the 'health and education centers' was: 'To germinate a model nuclear community which would form a foundation for the future Namibian society. Not only is Swapo concerned with the material well-being of the Namibians, but also more importantly with inculcating ideas of nationhood and social reconstruction. Through the project...SWAPO envisages to reorient Namibians with different cultural, social, and educational backgrounds towards the ideals of one Namibia, one People and one Nation.' (S. Shipanga: 'Development of the Namibia Education and Health Centre', a speech delivered in Oslo, Norway, no date mentioned; quoted in Mbamba 1979: 7. Apparently, 'S. Shipanga' is Andreas Shipanga, because Mbamba mentions him as the former Swapo Secretary for Information and Publicity.)

There were also particular techniques that were aimed at producing loyal cadres out of the exiles. Most of them, particularly the men but also a significant number of women, underwent military training after arriving in Zambia and Angola which concentrated on the conduct of guerrilla warfare. According to many former exiles, it was only designed to provide basic military skills and, especially in the mid-1970s, there were shortages of necessities and military materials.⁵⁴ The first step of training was, as one former exile put it, to ‘instil discipline in the cadres’: in addition to physical exercises, handling guns and tactics, training also involved political instruction.⁵⁵ However, political education was by no means restricted to the military; in different forms it also reached those who did not participate in military training. Apart from building up an armed force and organizing the exile population, military training and political education were technologies of power necessitated by the variety of backgrounds and motivations of the new exiles.

On the basis of former exile stories and of secondary literature⁵⁶ it appears that Swapo’s political education consisted of the basics of Namibian history, colonial economy and society and Swapo’s activities and programme. The instruction seems to have aimed at providing an elementary framework where the various experiences of individual exiles could be related to each other and the overall narrative framework of national liberation. At least from the mid-1970s, political instruction was modelled in part along socialist lines.⁵⁷ Those who were entrusted with ideological responsibilities, like political commissars, were educated in party schools in Eastern Europe before they started teaching others in the field; Soviet commissars also worked with the PLAN. Nevertheless, it seems that, by and large, the commitment to socialist ideology remained superficial both in the Swapo leadership and, especially, among the rank and file. Class differences in Namibia

Katjavivi (1988: 109) restates this commitment: ‘Both in PLAN and in its health and education centers in Angola and Zambia...SWAPO has created self-reliant communities, where it tries to put into practice what it preaches. The emphasis is on “social justice and progress for all”.’

⁵⁴ Some received better training in other countries, including the Soviet Union and Tanzania.

⁵⁵ For descriptions of the content and conditions of military training, see also Katjavivi (1986: 286); Liberation Support Movement (1978: 44-45).

⁵⁶ The contents and perceived functions of political training are discussed in Liberation Support Movement (1978: 40-45, n.d.: 18-23); Katjavivi (1986: 282-283); Dobell (1995: 174-175).

⁵⁷ In an interview conducted in October 1975, PLAN Political Commissar Kakauru Nganjone was already employing Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, speaking about Swapo as a ‘vanguard party’ that wages a ‘revolutionary struggle’, and about ‘progressive forces fighting to end capitalism and imperialism’, ‘world revolutionary process’ and ‘proletarian internationalism’. Liberation Support Movement (1978: 42-43, n.d.: 20-21).

closely paralleled racial differences, and these provided the basis for mobilizing mass support in vaguely defined nationalist terms (Bauer 1998; Peltola 1995), and constituted the consciousness that was nurtured by Swapo among its followers.⁵⁸ However, socialist ideas seem to have been truly adopted by a number of individuals, especially among the middle generation intellectuals who were radicalized either in the 1970s' waves of student activism or during their studies in exile.⁵⁹

An important part and consequence of exile practices and ideology was the production of a particular historical imagination of the liberation struggle and of its collective subject. The movement was portrayed in heroic terms as fulfilling an inevitable historical mission of national liberation, with the individual exile being recognised as a loyal, enduring and committed cadre. However, at the same time as comradeship between all the members of the organization was propagated, a strict hierarchy within the movement was established, with those at its apex elevated beyond mere mundane leadership positions into the status of national heroes in a continuum from the precolonial period into the present.⁶⁰ Swapo was democratic on paper but democracy was scantily practiced. Theoretically, the general principles of the movement's policies were to be decided and functionaries elected by a Congress every five years. In practice, the predominance of Sam Nujoma and his closest associates among the 'old guard' of the movement's external leadership was never put to a democratic test. Directives flowed from the top downwards through the layers of hierarchy. The organization was divided into different departments, each headed by a secretary who was a member of the Central Committee. Camp commanders headed the camps and had commanders or administrators for each camp section below them in the hierarchy. Further, people were divided into units,

⁵⁸ Swapo's broadly nationalist stance is also reflected in the apparent ease with which socialist rhetoric was discarded at the eve of independence. Indeed, it has been argued that rhetorical adherence to socialism was motivated predominantly by its pragmatic merits during the struggle. Apart from being fashionable at the time, it was aimed at pleasing the socialist bloc and the government of Angola, on whom Swapo relied for military support and an operational base. It may also have been a belated effort, after the movement's internal crisis, to incorporate the radical elements by taking their demands formally into account. See Leys and Saul (1994: 143); Saul and Leys (1995: 52); Harneit-Sievers (1985: 194-195); Strand (1991: 30-44, 65-68); Dobell (1995, 1998).

⁵⁹ For nationalist literature written by Swapo members and informed by socialist ideology, see Mbuende (1986); Kaakunga (1990); Angula (1990).

⁶⁰ See, e.g. Saul and Leys (1995: 43). See also Werbner's (1998: 75-76) distinction between 'popular' and 'monumental, heroic' nationhood in postcolonial Southern Africa.

each of which had an assigned leader.⁶¹ The exiles did not make independent decisions concerning their duties; the movement always assigned them. There were regular, usually daily, ‘parades’ that were organized in a military fashion and served as a platform of communication between commanders and the residents, which included the issuing of assignments.⁶² The process did not work the other way around; in practice, the leaders were not accountable. Seniority and precedence could not be openly questioned and critics were often treated as traitors and troublemakers. Swapo demanded unquestioning loyalty to the movement and unconditional commitment to what was defined as the collective good: an authoritarian hierarchy that was not restricted to the military but also applied to the civilian settlements.⁶³

The notions of of familiness and parental authority, often expressed in former exile accounts, were what welded the ideals of unity and comradeship together with authoritarian power relations, and regulated exile social relations of mutual and hierarchical support and reward (see also Friedman 2011). According to this moral ideal, the exiles were the ‘children’ of Swapo whose relation to them was similar to that of a parent: it was there to take care of them and their duty was to obey. Precedents for understanding this relationship in terms of seniority and unquestioning obedience had been set by Namibian family relations, boarding schools and the principles of apartheid alike.

⁶¹ As Mbamba put it:

‘The Office of the Swapo President makes all decisions concerning the development of the Centre and is responsible for the well-being of its inhabitants. No political meetings, except those called by a member of the Central Committee or the Executive Committee of Swapo, can be held at the Centre without permission from the Office of the President. The President (in consultation with the Executive Committee) appoints the Director and Deputy Director of the Centre to supervise the daily activities there.

The Director is assisted in his duties by his deputy, as well as 12 members of the Centre Council drawn from the representatives of all sections of the community. The Council meets once a month and at any other time when the situation demands it. The Director also has a police force under him, the Namibia Police, to maintain law and order in the Centre. The Director communicates with the residents mainly through the morning ‘parades’, during which he distributes the work to be done during the day and informs them of the news around the Centre.’ (Mbamba 1979: 10.)

⁶² These points are based on my personal communication with former exiles, as well as secondary literature, for example Mbamba (1979); Hishongwa (1983: 62-66); Katjavivi (1986: 307-311); Peltola (1995: 143-146, 150-153, 162).

⁶³ In addition to my interviews and personal communication with people who had firsthand experience of Swapo in exile, I draw here on Mbamba’s (1979: 10) and Peltola’s (1995: 150-153) descriptions.

After independence many felt that the pact between the movement's elite and its rank and file, implicit in exile relations of familiarity, had been violated. The rank-and-file narratives of life after return that I collected in 1992-3 were dominated by the themes of struggling to survive and nostalgia for exile unity. Exile leaders quickly transformed themselves into the new political elite while those who became members of the new black middle class praised the intellectual resources – education and the experience of living and working in different cultural environments – with which exile life had provided them, arming them with the potential for advancement even after independence. The have-nots, by contrast, gazed nostalgically back on what they remembered as the material and social security – food, clothing, housing, social acceptance and a sense of purpose in the service of national liberation – of exile that was often lacking after their return to Namibia. The tensions that arose from expectations concerning the enduring value of relations of loyalty and duty within the 'family' of former exiles became highly significant in ex-combatant politics after independence.

6 EX-COMBATANTS TO VETERANS: THE PRACTICES AND POLITICS OF REINTEGRATION

This chapter provides a broad outline of Namibian ex-combatant reintegration after 1989, with particular focus on government employment provision for ex-combatants in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It starts with a narrative of the major events in the Namibian trajectory of ex-combatant reintegration since independence. Further, it examines the biopolitics and politics of reintegration through looking into how reintegration initiatives framed their objects; how these framings motivated and justified the targeting of ex-combatants; what kinds of lines of inclusion and exclusion were drawn between ex-combatant groups; the practical measures of individual, social and economic discipline, welfare and enhancement undertaken in the name of reintegration; and the ways in which ex-combatants acted towards the authorities which, in turn, further shaped policies towards them. Analytically, the chapter reflects on the modalities of rule at play in reintegration as well as the implications of reintegration practices on ex-combatant agency and subjectivity. It concludes that instead of the neutral exercise in post-conflict management and peace-building required by national security, reintegration has actually been motivated more by exclusionary ideas of the nation and by the special bond between Swapo and its former exile cadres.

REINTEGRATION AS NEGOTIATION: THE TRAJECTORY OF EX-COMBATANT DEMANDS AND REINTEGRATION INITIATIVES

The ex-combatant / veteran issue arose out of Namibia's transition to independence when fighting forces on both sides were demobilized and exiles repatriated. This resulted in 25,000 former SWATF and Koevoet fighters and approximately 50,000 Swapo returnees of whom an uncertain number were PLAN ex-combatants (Colletta

et al. 1996: 131; Preston 1997: 454; Saul and Leys 1995: 63-64).⁶⁴ A contingent of UN peacekeepers called the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG) was involved in the transition to independence. The UNHCR and the Council of Churches in Namibia jointly implemented a repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration (RRR) programme for returnees (Council of Churches in Namibia 1989, 1990, 1991; UNHCR 1989). After demobilization and repatriation of fighters and returnees, it was assumed that the ex-combatants, returnees and demobilized soldiers would simply go back home and resume life in their local communities (Colletta et al. 1996; Preston 1997). Hence, there were no active policies for reintegration or rehabilitation in place when repatriation commenced (Preston 1997: 459).

A rapid differentiation took place in the fates of the returnees and former combatants (Preston 1997; Tapscott and Mulongeni 1990; Metsola 2001). The Swapo leadership returning from exile filled most of the top positions of the newly established Namibian government and returnees who had obtained education abroad became part of the higher public service or joined the private sector and contributed to the expansion of the emerging black middle class. In contrast, the majority who never made it further than combat fields and refugee settlements, as well as former SWATF and Koevoet fighters, often found themselves without employment or the skills suitable for civilian livelihoods. Most of the returnees resettled in the north-central regions of the country, becoming formally unemployed subsistence farmers. They rejoined families and local communities and in most cases were well welcomed. However, tensions soon emerged, apparently resulting both from socio-economic factors, such as the continuing unemployment of ex-combatants, and from differences in lifestyle and the persistent closeness between formerly exiled 'brothers' and 'sisters'. Many have since migrated to urban or peri-urban centres in search of better opportunities.

While mutual bonds of trust, dependence and assistance among the former exiles still existed after return, their scope was narrowed by the centrifugal tendencies of the post-independence situation. A gap opened between the realities of

⁶⁴ The South African administration had exact records of SWATF and Koevoet fighters while the number of ex-PLAN combatants and other former exiles is more difficult to establish as no exact statistics exist. Therefore the figure of 50,000 is an estimate. For more details, see p. 95, note 47. For reintegration purposes, all former exiles born before 1974 have been included in the definition of 'ex-combatant' since 1998.

educated, urbanized and employed former exiles and those who were less educated, rural-based and unemployed. Even if those who belonged to the former group complained about practical problems, the latter faced them at a greater magnitude, in the form of insecurity about daily survival. The rank and file ex-combatants were to become the target group of reintegration, delineated mainly by their elite and middle class counterparts working as politicians and civil servants.

The first wave of reintegration was a side effect of the formation of a new national army and police force during the transition to independence (Preston 1997: 463). In addition to answering to the state's security needs, the formation of the Namibia Defence Force (NDF) provided jobs for the ex-combatants; however, given the limitations of the economy the force was to be small, with 5,000 members initially (ibid.: 459; Martin Shalli, Major-General, Army Commander, interview 7 November 2002). According to Preston (1997: 459) the Ministry of Defence favoured ex-PLAN fighters at the expense of former SWATF members,⁶⁵ while women were initially excluded from the force and only later allowed to join. Whereas the NDF was started from scratch, the Namibian Police (Nampol) was transformed from the South West Africa Police (SWAPOL), the police force of the previous regime. In addition to members already serving with the force, new members were drawn from ex-PLAN fighters, especially as presidential, ministerial and border guards and as special constables (ibid.: 462). Altogether, NDF and Nampol absorbed 8,000 to 10,000 ex-combatants (ibid.: 463).

Most of the remaining ex-fighters experienced problems in generating adequate livelihoods and it was not long before they started showing their sense of 'common fate and common destiny'⁶⁶ in demonstrations in which they demanded jobs, money and recognition from Swapo and the government. The first such demonstrations took place in August 1990 and resulted in the first registration of some 18,000 ex-PLAN fighters out of 32,000 applicants. The first official

⁶⁵ In her words, 'the myth of egalitarian access and promotion disappeared, as it became known that Ministry of Defence (MoD) policy was that ex-SAFs should number no more than ten per cent of the force. Already in 1990 4,500 ex-PLAN fighters had been enlisted. By 1993 there was well below the nominal 10% agreed quota of ex-SAFs among the by then 6,500 NDF members' (Preston 1997: 459). According to Major-General Shalli, in 2002 approximately 40% of NDF personnel were ex-combatants, of whom approximately one in four were former SWATF fighters (interview with author, 7 November 2002). According to Colletta et al. (1996: 149), approximately 80% of NDF personnel were former SWAPO combatants by 1995. In spite of variance in estimated percentages, a general trend is clear.

⁶⁶ Words used by SIPE General Manager Ndilula in my interview with him.

reintegration measures were undertaken, including a one-off demobilization gratuity of R1,400 and training (Preston 1997: 455).

The Development Brigade was started in 1991 and was the first large-scale, long-term reintegration project. In 1993, it was transformed into a parastatal and renamed the Development Brigade Corporation (DBC). According to Colletta et al. (1996: 155), the Development Brigade concept was ‘inspired by the Botswana Youth Brigades and the skills training centers for ex-combatants in Zimbabwe’. There were also other initiatives, such as rehabilitation of the war-disabled and the requirement that companies applying for government tenders employ ex-combatants (Preston 1997: 455, 466-467; Colletta et al. 1996; Republic of Namibia 1997). Additionally, ex-combatants became one of the major groups catered for in the resettlement programme run by the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (Preston 1997: 466-467). By 1995, 6,000 beneficiaries had been settled on eight projects, of whom an unknown number were ex-combatants (Colletta et al. 1996: 171). However, the scheme was criticized for not being viable in the long run as well as for inappropriate targeting.⁶⁷ Additionally, there was a separate resettlement programme for the San, many of whom had served in the SWATF, with nearly 10,000 settlers by the end of 1993 (Colletta et al. 1996: 175-7). It was run by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia.

The Development Brigade focused on vocational training, the perennial favourite in reintegration programmes,⁶⁸ aiming to turn the ex-combatants into electricians, carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, plasterers and skilled agricultural workers in several centres around the country. It was planned that all of the 18,000 ex-combatants registered in 1990 would be incorporated. Actually only 4,000 were brought in, and most of them were retrenched in the last years of the Corporation. The Brigade was initially intended for fighters from both sides, but eventually its

⁶⁷ The aim of resettlement was to ‘improv[e]...the economic and social status of the previously disadvantaged communities’ (Republic of Namibia 2000: Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation), but the definition of ‘previously disadvantaged’ turned out to be flexible enough to allow a number of high government officials to receive land under the scheme. See e.g. ‘Civil servants, politicians stake claims to land’, *The Namibian*, 20 November 2002; ‘Govt officials threaten to boot farmworkers’, *The Namibian*, 20 November 2002; ‘Political Perspective’, *The Namibian*, 22 November 2002; ‘IPBC OK with land for well-off “up to a point”’, *The Namibian*, 27 November 2002.

⁶⁸ The appeal of vocational training is perhaps due to its seeming promise of autonomous generation of economic wellbeing combined with an image of the individual entrepreneur that suits the liberal economic imagination.

membership was almost exclusively drawn from the ranks of ex-PLAN members, including women. Alongside its skills development initiatives, the DBC established income-generating projects including crop production, poultry farming, brickmaking, and drilling boreholes. In 1996, the DBC launched four subsidiary companies though, by the late 1990s, these had largely gone bankrupt and the corporation was dissolved in 2001. (Preston 1997: 463-465; Colletta et al. 1996: 155-167; Republic of Namibia 2000: Ministry of Trade and Industry; Lamb 2007: 167-169.)

While the official emphasis of the DB/DBC was on providing skills to equip the ex-combatants for seeking employment or starting small businesses, in practice it was mostly staffed by former PLAN members and run in a quasi-military manner, providing the recruits with a lifestyle notably similar to that they had experienced in exile. The story of the DB/DBC was far from successful if considered in the terms set for it by the government: it was not financially viable, it did not manage to incorporate nearly the intended amount of ex-combatants and its merits in helping the trainees become competitive in the job market are questionable. In addition, according to the report of the Technical Committee on Ex-Combatants (Republic of Namibia 1998), it emerged that some of the beneficiaries of earlier assistance schemes, including 'a large number of former DBC employees', were not ex-combatants or former freedom fighters at all (ibid.: 11). These failures led the Committee to conclude that 'DBC is not a sustainable entity...There is a serious need to review the mandate of DBC' (ibid.: 12).

After the meagre successes of other reintegration mechanisms and the recurrence of large demonstrations by Swapo ex-combatants in 1995⁶⁹ and 1997-98, there was a shift from the patchwork of various non-coordinated schemes, such as the PLAN Veteran Trust, Swapo Veteran Trust, DBC and the government resettlement programme, into a centrally coordinated effort that drastically differs from the typical course of reintegration programmes: the government decided to solve the ex-combatant problem by providing public employment to all unemployed

⁶⁹ 'Fighters on march: Ex-Plan men give President ultimatum', *The Namibian*, 10 April 1995; 'Tackling the Plight of the Unemployed', *The Namibian*, 21 April 1995; 'Latvio lands in hot water', *The Namibian*, 9 May 1995; 'Anger mounts among ex-Plan combatants: March on State House, put pressure on President', *The Namibian*, 17 May 1995.

ex-combatants.⁷⁰ Most government actors with whom I discussed the development admitted that it resulted from the failure of previous attempts, notably the DBC, to provide a comprehensive and lasting solution to the ex-combatant problem, spurred by the massive demonstrations which they had organized in various parts of the country.

The first step was to set up a committee of deputy ministers and a Socioeconomic Integration Fund. After another round of ex-combatant registrations in 1995, Cabinet transferred the issue to the National Planning Commission, which established a Socioeconomic Integration Programme for Ex-Combatants (SIPE), tasked with creating job and training opportunities for ex-combatants and war orphans from exile.⁷¹ However, SIPE was constrained at first by insufficiencies in ex-combatant registration as well as lack of manpower. The pace of reintegration remained slow and in 1997 and 1998, another wave of ex-combatant demonstrations took place throughout the country, with the recurrent demand that they be given jobs. As one of them said: ‘We have suffered during the struggle and now we are still suffering while others are not. We have nothing to eat, no money at our homes and it seems nobody cares for us . . . This time we will not go back before we get jobs or until we are really sure that we are going to get jobs.’⁷² They also contrasted the plight of ex-combatants with elite affluence: ‘Some of our leaders are building big houses like castles for themselves while we are suffering. Why?’⁷³

The demonstrations culminated in spectacular mass action in July and August 1998, when thousands of ex-combatants assembled in Windhoek and Ondangwa, demanding government employment and defying orders to disperse.⁷⁴ In response, the Cabinet set up a technical committee under the Cabinet Committee on

⁷⁰ This shift was in accordance with the proposals of the TCEC (Republic of Namibia 1998: 15). Colletta et al. (1996: 209-212) likewise stressed the importance of employment but also expressed doubts concerning the capacity of the government to provide jobs to all ex-combatants or of the labour market in general to absorb them.

⁷¹ Republic of Namibia (2000: Office of the President); Republic of Namibia (1996); See also articles in the following newspapers: *The Namibian*, 23 and 29 May 1995, 25 July 1995, 3, 10 and 22 August 1995; 8 December 1995, 15 August 1996, and 29 and 30 October 1997; *Namibia Economist*, 20 September 1996.

⁷² ‘Angry ex-fighters launch new protest’, *The Namibian*, 21 July 1998.

⁷³ ‘“Abandoned” fighters take demo to Outapi’, *The Namibian*, 4 August 1998.

⁷⁴ See articles in the following newspapers: *The Namibian*, 7 May 1997, 26 June 1997, 29 September 1997, 24, 28 and 31 October 1997, 4, 6, 10 and 13 November 1997, 21, 22 and 27 July 1998, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 17 August 1998, 3 September 1998 and 23 December 1998; *Electronic Mail and Guardian*, 7 and 8 June 1997.

Defence and Security, consisting of permanent secretaries and other high-ranking officials from ministries, government agencies and Swapo, all of whom had extensive leadership experience within the liberation movement's exile structures, especially its military wing (Republic of Namibia 1998: 4-5; Niilo Taapopi, interview 18 November 2002).⁷⁵ In cooperation with SIPE, the Committee carried out a countrywide registration of ex-combatants, proposing that the DBC be discontinued and that the ex-combatants should be employed in the NDF, SFF, Nampol and in other government agencies and projects. It also suggested that they be awarded bursaries for education and that a fund would be established to distribute regular payments to aged and disabled ex-combatants as well as orphans (Republic of Namibia 2000: Office of the President; Republic of Namibia 1998: 3-5, 15-19). These initiatives were put into practice through SIPE and the passing of the War Veterans Subvention Act of 1999.

Through this scheme, which came to be called the 'Peace Project',⁷⁶ close to 15,000 ex-combatants were employed between 1998 and 2002, principally former exiles. Approximately two-thirds of them, mostly men, were recruited into the uniformed services, with the newly created Special Field Force (SFF) unit of the police absorbing the lion's share.⁷⁷ When the Project commenced, it initially targeted former exiles only, but former SWATF and Koevoet fighters were included from 1999 onwards after, clearly inspired by the successful demands of PLAN ex-combatants and other former exiles, they applied similar pressure to the

⁷⁵ Members of the committee were: Niilo Taapopi, Chairperson, Permanent Secretary (PS) of Home Affairs; Erastus Negonga, Deputy Chairperson, PS of Defence; Andrew Ndishishi, PS of the National Planning Commission; Joseph Iita, PS of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation; Kalumbi Shangula, PS of Health and Social Services; Andrew Intamba, Director of Namibia Central Intelligence Service; Paulus Kapia, Secretary of Swapo Youth League; Nghidinihamba Ndilula, General Manager of SIPE; and Hangapo Veico from Ministry of Works, Transport and Communication. Some appointed members did not participate in the working of the Committee including, among others, Lucas Hangula, Inspector-General of Nampol; Martin Shalli, Chief of Staff of Namibian Defence Force; and Nghidimondjila Shoombe, PS of Regional and Local Government and Housing. (Republic of Namibia 1998: 4-5; Republic of Namibia n.d. [2001]: 2.)

⁷⁶ 'We propose to the Namibian Nation to honour the integration of ex-combatants into the working life as a "Peace Project".' (Minister of Finance Nangolo Mbumba, 7 April 1999, Debates of the National Assembly, vol. 32/1999.)

⁷⁷ To be more exact, 18,361 ex-combatants and former fighters had been registered by 2002. Of these, 14,875 had been employed and 2,297 classified as war veterans. 9,188 of those employed were placed under the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Defence. The Ministry of Prisons and Correctional Services and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism employed 2,058 ex-combatants, many of them as prison and game wardens. Five other ministries took in 3,446 ex-combatants in menial jobs, such as cleaning. Only 183 were employed elsewhere. These figures were obtained from SIPE during an interview with Nghidinihamba Ndilula, the General Manager of the company, and member of the Technical Committee on Ex-combatants, 29 October 2002.

government;⁷⁸ they were, however, eventually registered and recruited in much smaller numbers than their Swapo counterparts.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the War Veterans Subvention Act defined a veteran as someone who had participated in the liberation struggle (as would the Veterans Bill eight years later), hence completely excluding those who had served in the South African surrogate forces.⁸⁰

Initially, only those who had actually been waging war were to be eligible for ex-combatant benefits. For example, in 1997 the General Manager of SIPE complained that some demonstrators had not been genuine fighters but students in exile;⁸¹ nonetheless, the following year all unemployed former exiles became official beneficiaries of the Peace Project, probably due to the presence of many non-combatant former exiles, mostly women, among the demonstrators demanding jobs and recognition (e.g. Dzinesa 2008: 13).⁸² This brought greater gender balance to reintegration, as the exile division of labour had placed women mainly in supportive functions and not in actual combat (Soiri 1996: 76-77; Preston 1997: 458; Metsola 2001: 78-81), but it is a history that is still reflected in more men than

⁷⁸ 'Ex-SWATF to March on State House', *The Namibian*, 2 June 1995; 'Centre Besieged by Ex-Fighters', *The Namibian*, 26 January 1999; 'Ex-soldiers Stick to their Guns', *The Namibian*, 27 January 1999; 'Action on Ex-Soldiers', *The Namibian*, 28 January 1999; 'Ex-soldiers Head Home', *The Namibian*, 29 January 1999.

⁷⁹ By November 2000, 13,992 former exiles had been registered, compared to 2,420 former SWATF and Koevoet fighters. By November 1999, 7,881 (65.9%) of the then registered 11,956 able-bodied former exiles had been employed, compared to 679 (34.3%) of the then registered 1,980 former SWATF and Koevoet members (Republic of Namibia n.d. [2001]: 3, 9).

⁸⁰ This did not go unopposed. For example, DTA MP Phillemon Moongo argued on 4 March 1999: 'The plight of all former fighters who are still unemployed...is not a joke. But I cannot buy the political nonsense that ex-PLAN members are the only war veterans. A war veteran to me means a person who has grown old or has long experience of military service.' (Debates of the National Assembly 32/1999.)

⁸¹ 'Fighters in yet another war of words...', *The Namibian*, 24 October 1997; 'Students amongst ex-Plan protesters', *The Namibian*, 11 November 1997.

⁸² According to the Technical Committee report, '[a]nyone who until PLAN demobilisation...was trained and deployed in combat formation or who was at any time trained and deployed in combat formation or was incapacitated after training and deployment' was classified as belonging to category A. Category B included 'anyone, who while in exile was given an assignment in any capacity by SWAPO...[a]nyone who was born in exile by parents who were both or one of them Namibian citizens participating in the liberation struggle under the leadership of SWAPO [and a]nyone who was assigned to school or training by SWAPO during the liberation struggle'. (Republic of Namibia 1998: 6.) The classification thus made a distinction between those who had been combatants proper, and other former exiles. However, in principle this distinction did not affect their eligibility for benefits ensuing from registration.

women having been placed in the uniformed services and more women than men in the non-uniformed services.⁸³

The loosening of the criteria of inclusion also fed the hopes of former exile youth. By the time the Peace Project commenced in 1998, many of those exiles who had returned to Namibia under-aged had completed their schooling or dropped out of school, representing another demarcation problem over the course of the programme. Initially, the eligibility criteria did not discriminate on the basis of age. Among other former exiles, the circle of ex-combatants was to include “anyone who was born in exile [to] parents who were both or one of them Namibian citizens participating in the liberation struggle” (Republic of Namibia 1998: 6). By the third round of registrations in October and November 2000, however, this definition had been found problematic and the Cabinet decided that ‘not everybody who was born in exile during the liberation struggle was an ex combatant and, therefore, entitled to claim a job under the peace project’ (Republic of Namibia n.d. [2001]: 6, 7). Additionally, young people who went into exile only briefly in 1988 or 1989 were to be excluded (ibid.: 10). Only those born before 1974 would be eligible for benefits, with the exception of war orphans, that is, those whose parents had died in exile. However, even after the official age-limit was introduced, fairly significant numbers of young former exiles were recruited. According to the final report of the technical committee on ex-combatants, 464 former exiles who had gone into exile in 1988 and 1989 or were born in exile were registered during the third registration exercise (ibid.).

Once it seemed that the door to employment initially opened by the Peace Project had started closing again, the youth also tried applying pressure on government, as older ex-combatants had done. A group of youngsters calling themselves ‘young Swapo loyalists’ gathered at Swapo headquarters in Katutura in 2001 for several weeks, claiming ex-combatant benefits by virtue of being born in

⁸³ In the first Technical Committee registration, carried out in 1998, and the third registration, carried out in 2000, 4,317 men and 2,752 women were registered in category A (those trained and deployed in combat formations); 1,027 men and 2,840 women were registered in category B, covering other former exiles; figures for the second registration were unavailable. By November 1999, 2,848 category A and 1,141 category B ex-combatants had been absorbed into the NDF and Nampol. 1,761 category A and 2,227 category B ex-combatants had been absorbed into other ministries (Republic of Namibia 1998: 8-9; Republic of Namibia n.d. (2001): 3, 9). Together, these figures suggest a gender division between uniformed and non-uniformed services, and this impression is reinforced by the correspondence between the Technical Committee and various ministries (copies in author’s possession), containing lists of ex-combatants to be employed, as well as the author’s personal observations.

exile or to parents who had been there. Government representatives denied their right to such benefits and they were finally arrested and charged with trespass.⁸⁴

The creation in 1999 of the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSS), a quasi-military training programme to counter youth unemployment, can be seen as a response to youth expectations. Sacky Kayone, Governor of Omusati region, explicitly tied its establishment to ex-combatant reintegration: “The Youth Service Scheme ... was initiated because ... with the [re]integration process, some of these problems started to crop up.”⁸⁵ However, the scheme was modest in scale and faced problems similar to those faced by the Development Brigade Corporation. Disgruntled NYSS members marched to Windhoek in 2002 to meet President Nujoma with complaints that they had not received the promised jobs and education opportunities. They were accused of indiscipline and threatened with dismissal while the leaders of the group were arrested and expelled from the NYSS.⁸⁶

Job provision through the Peace Project pacified the ex-combatants for nearly ten years. However, in June 2006, people claiming to be Swapo ex-fighters again came out with demands when a newly formed ‘Committee on Welfare of Ex-combatants/ War Veterans’ (which later became the Namibia Ex-Freedom Fighters and War Veterans’ Association) submitted a number of ‘proposals’ – actually demands – to President Pohamba in June 2006.⁸⁷ The most significant of these was

⁸⁴ See articles in *The Namibian*, 10 and 15 October 2001, 28 November 2001, 13 and 21 December 2001, 12 April 2002, 12 August 2002.

⁸⁵ Interview with author, 22 November 2002.

⁸⁶ Lamb (2007: 170-171); see also articles in *The Namibian*, 9 and 11 April 2001; 16, 19 and 20 August 2002; 9, 10 and 16 September 2002; 6 November 2002; 29 January 2003; and 8 April 2003.

⁸⁷ This account of the compensation case is based on the following articles: *The Namibian*, 21 June 2006, 24, 25 and 28 July 2006, 1, 7, 15, 21, 25 August 2006, 5, 12 and 22 September 2006, 5 and 16 October 2006, 3 November 2006, 13 February 2007, 21, 22 and 30 May 2007, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11 and 28 June 2007, 11 July 2007, 25 September 2007, 9 and 26 October 2007, 8, 9, 22 and 26 November 2007, 25 January 2008, 18 June 2008, 19 August 2008, 4, 5, 18 and 22 September 2008, 7, 9, 13, 17, 20, 22, 23 and 28 October 2008, 5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21 and 28 November 2008, 3 and 17 December 2008, 26 January 2009, 25 February 2009, 10, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25 and 30 March 2009, 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 15, 16, 17, 24 and 29 April 2009, 5, 8, 12, 13, 15 and 27 May 2009, 1 and 5 June 2009, 20 and 24 July 2009, 13, 17, 18, 19 and 28 August 2009, 1, 3, 9, 18, 22 and 30 September 2009, 2, 5, 7 and 8 October 2009, 4, 6, 10, 13 and 20 November 2009 and 4 December 2009; *New Era*, 24, 27 and 31 July 2006, 25 August 2006, 5 September 2006, 5 October 2006, 1, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11 June 2007, 26 September 2007, 21, 22 and 23 November 2007, 17 March 2008, 4, 7, 14 and 21 April 2008, 30 June 2008, 11 July 2008, 14 and 20 August 2008, 3, 7, 16 and 17 October 2008, 5, 13, 19 and 25 November 2008, 12 December 2008, 29 January 2009, 11 and 27 February 2009, 3, 13 and 24 March 2009, 1, 2, 8, 16, 20 and 21 April 2009, 5, 13 and 26 May 2009, 1, 4, 10 and 15 June 2009, 21, 23 and 24 July 2009, 11, 13 and 18 August 2009, 3, 7 and 22 September 2009, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 27 October 2009, 2, 5, 10, 13, 16, 17, 18 and 26 November 2009, 1 December 2009 and 12 January 2010;

the demand for monetary compensation of either a lump sum of N\$ 500,000 (approximately € 60,000 at the time) or N\$ 31,000 (approximately € 3,700) per every year spent in exile as well as a monthly remuneration of N\$ 8,000 for each ex-combatant or war veteran. Additional demands included raising the retirement age of ex-combatants to seventy years,⁸⁸ free education and medical services, housing, protection from ‘unfair competition’ in business, appointments to positions, income-generating projects, setting up an ex-combatants’ fund, fishing quotas, mining concessions and decent burials. Referring to the sacrifices of ex-combatants, the spokesperson of the group, Alex Kamwi, justified these claims by saying: ‘People question the credibility of us combatants, but did they ever question this when we were fighting for this country?’ (‘Ex-combatants’ body makes fresh demands’, *The Namibian*, 21 June 2006). Their tone was still tempered at this stage: ‘We feel there is no need to demonstrate. The Swapo government is ours, they were also freedom fighters...I’m sure they will listen to us...When people think Plan fighters, they automatically think demonstrations. But we’re matured. We can work things out diplomatically.’⁸⁹

Committee representatives met President Pohamba who referred them on to Swapo president and former Namibian President, Sam Nujoma – an indication of the latter’s lasting recognition by ex-combatants as their ultimate leader. Nujoma responded harshly. He pointed out that the demands were unrealistic and fulfilling them would bankrupt the country. He questioned the patriotism of the demonstrators, accusing them of being selfish and intent on dividing the nation and disturbing peace and stability. According to him:

These individuals do not only have a clear agenda of dividing the Namibian people and disturb the peace and stability that we enjoy...but also to bring the history of the national liberation struggle led by Swapo into disrepute...It is void of any truth to...say that the Swapo Party Government has done nothing to the plight of the Swapo Party ex-combatants/war veterans...Currently, all ex-combatants are integrated into the Public Service of Namibia and the state-owned enterprises. Those who could not be employed, are registered with the War Veterans’ Trust Fund...Some unscrupulous ex-combatants have deserted their jobs or were dismissed...due to undisciplined behaviour or through criminal

Informanté, 7 May 2009, 27 August 2009, 17 September 2009, 12 November 2009 and 17 December 2009.

⁸⁸ Earning salaries for a longer period would enable them to accumulate higher pension levels.

⁸⁹ Alex Kamwi, quoted in the following articles: ‘Ex-combatants’ body makes fresh demands’, *The Namibian*, 21 June 2006; ‘War vets on warpath’, *The Namibian*, 25 July 2006; ‘Nujoma lashes out on divisive forces’, *Die Republikein*, 26 July 2006; ‘War vets “open for dialogue”’, *New Era*, 27 July 2006.

offences. These elements have joined the...so-called committee...[Some] members of the so-called Committee...are employed in the Public Service...Ruusa Malulu, the Chairperson of this committee, was offered employment in 1998 and refused...Other members of this committee have either resigned or retired...and are receiving pension...The rest have been fired due to lack of discipline, drunkardness and absenteeism.

Swapo embarked upon the armed liberation struggle on 26 August 1966 with a clear purpose of liberating our motherland from the minority white apartheid regime of South Africa. Thousands of Namibians voluntarily joined the liberation struggle. Nobody was promised compensation or other payment after the war...It was the valour, gallantry and heroic deeds of our heroes and heroines which inspired...Namibians both inside the country and those of us who were in exile to fight with vigour and determination...Therefore, it is not correct to assume that only those of us who were in exile participated in the liberation struggle. The war of liberation was a national undertaking where all progressive Namibians participated...All Namibians, except those who...allied themselves with the South African apartheid colonial regime in Namibia, suffered the agony of apartheid colonialism. Every Namibian had family members killed and massacred by the enemy...The participation in the war of national liberation under the banner of Swapo was voluntary...Freedom fighters are not mercenaries and this clearly distinguished Swapo Plan ex-combatants from the South West Africa Territorial Force and Koevoet...The Swapo Party Government has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all Namibians, irrespective of colour, race, ethnic origin and political affiliation...The Swapo Party Government has prioritised the provision of basic services and public amenities to all our citizens equitably in all the thirteen regions. These services are provided to all Namibians, irrespective of their participation in the liberation struggle.

This committee must be rejected and condemned...We must...remain vigilant against reactionary and divisive forces at work who want to divide us by twisting the heroic history of our liberation struggle...I, therefore, urge all Swapo Party Regional Coordinators to inform Swapo Party structures from sections, branches and districts to ensure that these misguided elements...are not allowed to organise any meeting or demonstrations under the name of the Swapo Party...In conclusion, the Swapo Party urges all Namibians, irrespective of their political background to promote the Swapo Party Government's policy of national reconciliation, peace and stability to enhance the socio-economic development of all Namibians.⁹⁰

The Committee decided to mobilize ex-combatants countrywide for a demonstration while still preferring a negotiated solution and expressing their respect and loyalty to Nujoma. Kamwi said: '[W]e are not going to deny him as his children. We still regard him as our father' ('War vets "open for dialogue"', *New Era*, 27 July 2006). However, they were prepared to march to State House and stay until their demands were met. An opposition party, Congress of Democrats, joined the debate, criticizing Swapo's response and emphasizing the contrast between a self-enriching political elite and their poor rank-and-file former comrades. Swapo supporters countered by publicly demonstrating their loyalty. A group of a few hundred party loyalists marched in Windhoek, singing revolutionary songs and carrying placards in support of the Founding President and against what they called public insults towards him.

⁹⁰ 'Nujoma lashes out at divisive forces', speech by Sam Nujoma, reproduced in *Die Republikein* 26 July 2006.

Receiving their petition, Sophia Shaningwa, Governor of the Khomas Region, urged Swapo members and sympathizers to stand together to defend the Namibian people against ‘imperialists’. A similar show of loyalty was staged in Oshakati a couple of weeks later. The war of words escalated to the point where the Namibian National Society for Human Rights reported that Nujoma had threatened the Committee leader Ruusa Malulu and a radio reporter who had interviewed her.⁹¹ Nujoma was quoted as having said that ‘those who are demanding compensation are bandits...They must remember that we still have guns and those of you who side with them, we will shoot you...There are two diminutive women in this country who are sowing confusion. We must eradicate them.’⁹²

In common with previous responses to ex-combatant demands, however, Swapo started gradually moving towards accommodating them. In early August 2006, President Pohamba promised to ‘address the plight of those...ex-combatants who are currently receiving a small pension’ (‘President rejects war vets’ demands’, *The Namibian*, 7 August 2006). On the eve of Heroes’ Day,⁹³ Swapo restated that the Committee enjoys no support, but the party was ‘cognisant of the fact that the many projects and mechanisms put in place over the years to address the plight of ex-combatants...may not have been sufficient due to lack of resources...That is why both the Swapo Party and Government have stepped up the ongoing efforts aimed at...addressing this very important issue.’ (‘Vets get Heroes’ Day olive branch’, *The Namibian*, 25 August 2006.) As the first step, the Cabinet decided to build 45 low-cost houses for Robben Island political prisoners, PLAN veterans and ‘people brutalized internally’.

In October 2006, this co-optation of the veterans was institutionalized through launching a Ministry of Veterans Affairs. Importantly, the concept of ‘ex-combatant’ was given a new, extended definition, in line with what Nujoma had said in his speech. According to Pohamba, ‘our Government regards all those patriotic

⁹¹ The National Society of Human Rights, later renamed Namrights, is Namibia’s major human rights organization, one that has often voiced criticism against the government. It has been led since independence by Phil ya Nangoloh, a former Swapo exile who found himself in conflict with the organization and left it, living in the US for a few years before returning to Namibia in the mid-1980s. He became active in the Parents’ Committee, an organization that was working on the issue of Swapo detainees, and formed the NSHR after independence.

⁹² Quoted in ‘Nujoma in hate speech row’, *The Namibian*, 1 August 2006 and ‘UN takes issue over Nujoma’s “death threats”’, *The Namibian*, 25 August 2006.

⁹³ Heroes’ Day is celebrated on 26 August, the date of the first clash between Swapo combatants and South African forces in 1966.

Namibians who took part in the struggle for national liberation of Namibia, regardless of whether such citizens were in exile or not, as ex-combatants' ('New Ministry for war veterans', *New Era*, 5 October 2006). Henk Mudge, an opposition politician, expressed concern about this emphasis, arguing that former SWATF and Koevoet members should not be overlooked: 'These members were merely professional soldiers...recruited by a foreign country...They were intimidated and brainwashed...exactly the same way in which Swapo brainwashed the Plan fighters' ('Ex-Koevoet, SWATF should also benefit from Veterans' Ministry', *The Namibian*, 16 October 2006).

The newly appointed Minister of Veteran Affairs, Ngarikutuke Tjiriange, called for patience while his ministry established its structures, defined beneficiary categories and registered veterans and former combatants. He stressed that the Committee on Welfare of Ex-combatants/ War Veterans, which by then claimed over 7,000 registered members, was not mandated to register anyone. In February, when they again threatened to march, the Ministry responded that it did not consider the Committee to be representative of all veterans; rather, the Ministry was in the process of setting up such a body itself.

Unhappy with their official sidelining, the Committee marched on the Ministry. By now, their concern was focused primarily on monetary compensation that they said had been promised to them by the UNHCR in 1989. Matheus Nangolo, the Committee's assistant coordinator, said, 'all we want is our money. We don't need any projects or housing – first we want our money and then projects can come later.' The chairperson of the committee, Ruusa Malulu, said: 'They can't tell us that government does not have money, but we have a State House that has been built for so much. We need money to eat and we need it now.' ('Ex-fighters won't budge', *New Era*, 5 June 2007.) The police tried to disperse the demonstrators but they stood their ground. Two days later, Tjiriange reconfirmed that there would be no money. This angered the demonstrators. 'We will then die here! This will become the next Cassinga, the next Heroes' Acre,'⁹⁴ shouted Malulu ('Read my lips: There's no money, Minister tells vets', *The Namibian*, 7 June 2007). Referring to Nujoma's claim that participation in the struggle had been voluntary, she added: 'We were all volunteers during the liberation struggle. Why is it that

⁹⁴ The Heroes' Acre is a war memorial near Windhoek that celebrates the liberation struggle and where struggle notables are buried.

some people that we volunteered with have fully paid-off farms and we have nothing? Do you want to be ministers for life?...We are going to get their farms by force if they are not going to listen' ('War vets threaten land grab', *New Era*, 7 June 2007). Another demonstrator challenged the idea of voluntary participation: 'Some of us were taken by force to the bush and removed from school to go into exile' ('Protesters stick to their guns', *New Era*, 7 June 2007).⁹⁵ Alex Kamwi said: 'I died when I joined Swapo and now I am still dead, I don't fear death . . . Sam Nujoma even said a PLAN fighter can never retreat. I will only be alive when I get what I want' (ibid.). The protesters also threatened to hand in their voters' registration cards, 'so that we don't vote for any party and even the SWAPO Party. We are tired of everything' (ibid.). Eventually, the government met the demonstrators and they agreed to go home and wait for further response.

The new Veterans Bill was introduced at the end of 2007 and came into force as the Veterans Act in August 2008. It provides for registering and assisting veterans and their dependants. According to the Veterans Act (section 1), a 'veteran' is defined as:

any person who (a) was a member of the liberation forces; (b) consistently and persistently participated or engaged in any political, diplomatic or under-ground activity in furtherance of the liberation struggle; or (c) owing to his or her participation in the liberation struggle was convicted, whether in Namibia or elsewhere, of any offence closely connected to the struggle and sentenced to imprisonment.⁹⁶

Two points are worth noting: first, that in principle the definition of 'veteran' is no longer restricted to former exiles or even Swapo members, and second that the status is firmly anchored in participation in the liberation struggle and excludes those who fought on the other side.⁹⁷ Speaking of former SWATF and Koevoet, Tjiriange

⁹⁵ This argument has occasionally surfaced during earlier demonstrations. For example, in 2000, a member of a group of demonstrating disabled ex-combatants countered similar volunteer arguments of the government by saying: 'I know most of the Ministers went abroad voluntarily...but what about those people who were forced to join the struggle?...Some of us were forcefully taken from our father's house. We were not volunteers.' ('Vet "volunteers" vexed', *The Namibian* 14 July 2000.) Some of my research participants also told of having been 'taken from school' or knowing others who had experienced that.

⁹⁶ The definition excludes deserters, a definition that has been applied to those who left Swapo in exile or were captured by enemy forces and pressured to join them.

⁹⁷ This formulation is in line with the veteran legislation of some other Southern African countries. In Zimbabwe, "war veteran" means any person who underwent military training and participated, consistently and persistently, in the liberation struggle which occurred in Zimbabwe and in neighbouring countries between the 1st January, 1962, and the 29th February, 1980, in connection

argued, ‘Whether forced or volunteered, they were part of an army that kept colonialism alive in this country. The South African army did not come here to hunt elephants, buffaloes and kudus, but to kill Namibians’ (‘Tjiriange non-committal on Swapo ex-detainees’, *New Era*, 7 April 2008). These sentiments were echoed by Prime Minister Nahas Angula: ‘There were some Koevoets, SWATF and spies who allowed themselves to be used by the enemies and they must bow their heads in shame. The struggle was long and bitter because some sided with the enemy that committed heinous crimes’ (‘Angula in no-nonsense mood’, *New Era*, 21 April 2008). As in 1998, there was heated debate over the criteria of inclusion between Swapo and the opposition parties in Parliament.

As the first step in accommodating the veterans, their monthly payout was increased from N\$ 500 to N\$ 2,000. Satisfied with the situation, the veterans’ association made peace with the government, with Kamwi victoriously explaining: ‘the President made it clear that if it weren’t for us calling on his door, the Ministry...would not have been formed’ (‘War veterans pacified after meeting with President’, *The Namibian*, 25 January 2008). However, not everybody was as happy. Tjiriange received death threats, apparently from former SWATF and Koevoet disgruntled over their continued exclusion. Following the increase in monthly payout, a process of countrywide registrations commenced in April 2008 while the ministry and the veterans’ association continued to wrestle over the amounts and kinds of veteran assistance, the veterans continuing to push for significant lump sum payments. Eventually, the 2009–10 budget contained N\$ 50,000 payments for 500 elderly veterans, with plans to extend the circle of beneficiaries in following years. In 2010 the co-optation of the organized veteran movement was completed by creating a single official association, with key personnel of the independent association, like Kamwi and Malulu, recruited to top positions.

By 2012, the circle of beneficiaries to receive the N\$ 50,000 payment had grown to contain 27,000 registered veterans. Those who had joined the struggle in 1988 or 1989 received lump sums of N\$ 20,000. Additionally, a monthly grant of

with the bringing about of Zimbabwe’s independence on the 18th April, 1980’ (Republic of Zimbabwe 1992). Likewise, in Mozambique, a “veteran of the national liberation struggle” means anyone who actively participated in the liberation struggle (Kostner and Bowles 2004: 2). South Africa is a different case. There, the definition of a veteran includes former forces from both sides of the conflict (Republic of South Africa 2011). This has not escaped the attention of Namibian former SWATF and Koevoet who have been trying to gain access to South African veteran benefits; see *The Namibian*, 19 November 2010, 7 May 2012 and 16 July 2012.

N\$ 2,200 is paid to those veterans who are unemployed, retired or below the tax threshold. All veterans are also entitled to a maximum N\$ 200,000 government support to an income-generating project of their own choice. They also receive assistance with school fees and for burial costs, houses and agricultural equipment, as well as vocational training.⁹⁸

As had happened earlier with the Peace Project, the registration and compensation of veterans encouraged demands and prolonged demonstrations by so-called struggle children, the grown-up children of veterans proper. They voiced their concerns in a similar rhetoric to the older veteran generation, referring to the sufferings of the struggle and lost opportunities, expressing their loyalty to, and faith in, Swapo, for example by referring to themselves as ‘sons and daughters of Swapo forever’ (‘Struggle children still have 30 days’, *The Namibian*, 13 November 2008) and singing liberation songs, but also contrasting their plight with the ‘ministers’ children’ (“‘Struggle children’ remain unwavering in their demands’, *The Namibian*, 22 October 2008) and threatening to withdraw their votes from Swapo if their plight was not addressed. After initially turning them down, the government gradually gave in to their demands, registering close to 10,000 of them, employing approximately 1,000 in the army and freezing recruitment to all entry level civil service posts until their registration and verification is completed.⁹⁹ In other words, they seem bound for government employment like the older returnee generation before them. Former exile children have also launched their own organization, the Namibia Exile Kids Association.

Although the demands for compensation only grew to the point of demonstrations in 2006, they did not suddenly emerge out of nowhere. Similar demands had occasionally cropped up in earlier years but apparently been swept into the focus on employment. For example, in 1997, a group of disabled veterans were campaigning for a lump sum payment of N\$ 75,000,¹⁰⁰ and referring to even earlier

⁹⁸ See articles in the following sources: *The Namibian*, 14 October 2010, 4 and 7 March 2011, 20 April 2011, 14 February 2012, 24 April 2012, 12 and 25 October 2012; *New Era*, 18 October 2010, 18 January 2011, 9 February 2011, 4 and 8 March 2011, 6 and 14 April 2011, 16 and 27 February 2012, 14 May 2012, 16 July 2012, 4 September 2012, 25 October 2012; Gwen Lister: ‘War of words over war veterans’, 31 July 2013, <http://www.osisa.org/economic-justice/blog/war-words-over-war-veterans>, accessed 17.4.2014.

⁹⁹ See e.g. ‘RDP cries foul over jobs for “struggle children”’, *The Namibian*, 25 October 2012; ‘Political Perspective’, *The Namibian*, 19 October 2012.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Increasing the stakes: war disabled want N\$75 000 each’, *The Namibian*, 28 October 1997.

demands by the ex-combatants, the then Minister of Higher Education, Nahas Angula, told me:

Initially some of them were convinced that they should be given a lump sum amount of money...The government convinced them that 'no, to give you a lump sum of a lot of money will not solve your problem...because if we give you money today, tomorrow you finish, you come back...You know what that means to the economy if you have to cough up so [much money]...[In] Zimbabwe [it] did not solve the problem... First of all, it will distort the budget, second, it will not solve the problem...[You just] spend the money and come back again.¹⁰¹

Some of the people I met in 2002 and 2003 also expressed their desire to be compensated,¹⁰² yet most ex-combatants did not: as in earlier demonstrations, the demand for compensation was clearly secondary to government employment. However, once most ex-combatants were employed, the ground shifted towards compensation.

To conclude, every major phase of registrations and reintegration has been ushered in by waves of demonstrations by ex-combatants. This happened in 1990, in 1995, in 1997-8 and again in 2006. Each phase of the long negotiation between ex-combatants and political authorities has followed a similar pattern. The ex-combatants organize and demonstrate; the authorities respond by denying their demands; the ex-combatants persist, advancing increasingly critical arguments; and finally a compromise is reached. Usually a group of ex-combatants would march to a local Swapo or government office, demanding to meet party or government representatives, usually no less than President Nujoma, in order to hand in a petition and voice their grievances and demands. They would highlight their contributions to the liberation struggle and their current suffering. The demonstrators would stay in place for days or weeks, waiting to be attended to. More people would join in as the word spread. Eventually, representatives of the government or Swapo would meet them, promise employment or other benefits and often register them. They would then disperse and return home. However, if their concerns were not addressed satisfactorily, they would take to regional capitals or Windhoek, where they would

¹⁰¹ Interview with author, 4 November 2002.

¹⁰² See Mandume's narrative on p. 196.

again attempt to meet the President.¹⁰³ The largest demonstrations drew thousands of participants (a significant number in Namibian terms), some in different towns around the country simultaneously. Additionally, when the ex-combatants were not demonstrating, they were approaching local notables, such as Swapo Party representatives or local councillors at their offices, both individually and in small groups.

According to many ex-combatants, as well as other members of the public, the demonstrations were decisive for ex-combatant employment provision. They argue that without such pressure the plight of the ex-combatants would just have been ignored.¹⁰⁴ While some policymakers and implementers that I interviewed agreed with this, they mostly tended to stress the responsible attitude and initiative of the government, arguing that the demonstrations did not have a significant influence on government actions, as plans and programmes were already in place and the same steps towards reintegration would have been taken anyway. The only difference that the demonstrations could have made, according to these sources, was to speed up the process.

Whatever the merits of these opposing views, many of the initiatives geared to ex-combatant employment provision came into being following the 1995 unrest and were consolidated and accelerated in 1998-99 after renewed demonstrations. Such initiatives include the creation of the Socioeconomic Integration Fund and SIPE, the idea of a Border Guard Unit under Home Affairs, which was clearly the beginning of the Special Field Force, and the idea of drafting a Bill to support and compensate War Veterans.

¹⁰³ This happened in July 1998, when government representatives apparently tried to take a tougher line than before and did not meet with the demonstrators for weeks. The strategy backfired as the demonstrations consequently spread to Ondangwa and Windhoek and grew bigger than ever before.

¹⁰⁴ For example, DTA MP J. de Waal argued on 13 April 1999: '[T]hey [the government] have wasted nine years and millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on numerous unsuccessful plans...I suspect they would still be dithering today if it weren't for the fact that they have been panicked by the appearance of a new political party in an election year. This stampeded them into trying a quick-fix solution' (Debates of the National Assembly 33/1999). The new political party to which de Waal is referring is the Congress of Democrats under the leadership of former PLAN combatant, political prisoner, trade unionist and high-ranking Swapo official, Ben Ulenga. Many interviewees held the view that the formation of the CoD was decisive in speeding up ex-combatant reintegration. Ulenga's move came shortly after ex-combatant demonstrations and a year before parliamentary and presidential elections.

SECURITY THREAT OR NATIONAL HEROES? JUSTIFYING REINTEGRATION

‘Assisting the poor is a means of government, a potent way of containing the most difficult section of the population and improving all other sections.’¹⁰⁵

‘This book is dedicated to the gallant sons and daughters, heroes and heroines under the leadership of their vanguard SWAPO, and to those who struggled and sacrificed their precious lives for the total liberation of Namibia.’¹⁰⁶

The various reasons behind Namibian ex-combatant policies are certainly important. However, for the purposes of this study it is equally important to examine how these policies were justified and put to practice, and a few distinct discursive registers are discernible in the arguments justifying reintegration procedures and portraying the target of these interventions, the ex-combatant.

One prevalent view of the ex-combatants sees them as needy, helpless and potentially dangerous. Their war experiences have translated into difficulties in adapting to civilian existence, constituting them as antisocial characters who roam from the countryside to the cities, where they idle on the streets and are prone to drunkenness, promiscuity and crime, incapable of engaging productively in the economy. This view can be found across the Namibian discursive terrain, from Parliamentary debates and government documents down to bar talk. For example, Home Affairs Minister Jerry Ekandjo justified the absorption of ex-combatants into the Special Field Force as ‘the price we have to pay for peace’ as they could ‘build a bomb out of nothing’ and had the potential ‘to turn this country upside down’.¹⁰⁷ Likewise, the Technical Committee on Ex-combatants argued that ‘most of the long serving ex PLAN combatants and those with specialized training and colourful military exploits...need...urgent attention as their patience might develop into desperation with unpredictable results’ (Republic of Namibia 1998: 13).

Prime Minister Hage Geingob connected the security problem posed by the ex-combatants with economic stability:

Business people...told me: ‘Mr. Prime Minister, it is not only your problem, it is our problem.’ That is why I call it a Peace Project, because if we do not solve this problem, the

¹⁰⁵ Firmin Marbeau (1847) *Du paupérisme en France et des moyens d’y remédier au principes d’économie charitable*, Paris; quoted in Procacci (1991: 151).

¹⁰⁶ Dedication in Sam Nujoma’s autobiography; Nujoma (2001).

¹⁰⁷ ‘SFF “the price we have to pay for peace”’, *The Namibian*, 24 October 2002.

peace that we are enjoying today can easily be undermined if we have so many people who are trained, some of them with arms, and just roaming around the streets.¹⁰⁸

Finance Minister Nangolo Mbumba argued along similar lines:

It is this Government's firm decision to address the ex-combatant dilemma once and for all by directly offering public employment...Cabinet considers the full integration of ex-combatants into the social, political and economic tapestry of our country as an investment in stability, democracy and above all, peace...I would also like to...urge all public enterprises, chambers, associations and the private sector in general to support the programme...through the creation of similar employment commitments. After all, they as property and business owners are the biggest beneficiaries of the Peace Project.¹⁰⁹

This view justifies assistance offered to ex-combatants by economic efficiency, social health and security. Employing the ex-combatants will pacify them, which in turn will contribute to stability, democracy and peace. 'Property and business owners' will benefit directly through a decrease in property crime and indirectly through positive effects on the business climate.

The adoption of the Peace Project amidst calls for cutting the public sector was mainly justified by sacrificing short-term fiscal prudence and budget balance for long-term social stability.¹¹⁰ The ex-combatants were said to have organizational capacity, strategic knowledge and military skills that might translate to unrest, a perception that was reinforced when ex-combatants stepped over the conventional limits of demonstrating. For instance, in 1995, demonstrating ex-combatants briefly took Deputy Minister of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, Hadino Hishongwa, hostage and in 1998 Minister of Trade and Industry, Hidipo Hamutenya, narrowly escaped a similar fate. Four Regional Councillors were held hostage in Oshakati in 1997.¹¹¹ According to the former Secretary to Cabinet and

¹⁰⁸ Hage Geingob, 27 April 1999, in *Debates of the National Assembly* 33/1999.

¹⁰⁹ Nangolo Mbumba, 7 April 1999, in *Debates of the National Assembly* 32/1999.

¹¹⁰ Finance Minister, Nangolo Mbumba, said: 'Should the [ex-combatant] programme not have been introduced, the overall deficit would have come down to 3 per cent of GDP in 1999/2000 and would have brought us to our stated NDP1 target. The fact that the Government has allowed an upward deviation from this target, clearly demonstrates the priority given to accomplish the Government's Peace Project' (*Debates of the National Assembly* 32/1999).

Prime Minister Geingob made the same point in more dramatic terms: 'If you take the Peace Plan, 9,000 people added to our already bloated civil service, that is a disaster! But what was a better option? To have them demonstrate every day and eventually occupy the farms?...They are not happy yet, but we took concrete action and that stemmed those demonstrations' (*Debates of the National Assembly* 40/2000, p. 339).

¹¹¹ SAPA news agency, Johannesburg, 10 October 1995, reprinted in *Facts and Reports* 25(U), 27 October 1995, p. 8; 'Namibian minister flees enraged ex-guerrillas', *Electronic Mail and Guardian*,

President's secretary, 'it was going to be a question of the first bullet being fired at a minister, post-independence'.¹¹²

The idea of ex-combatants as a security threat is hardly new and hardly unique to Namibia. On the contrary, it has deep historical roots. Poverty, vagrancy, the crumbling of 'community' and moral decay are classic concerns over an uncontrolled and negative form of modernization that runs counter to intentional development (Cowen and Shenton 1996). Attempts to govern such problems in the name of proper functioning of the economy and society go back to early-nineteenth-century Europe when practices that combined restraint and guidance, including social assistance, public and private hygiene, reinforcement of the family and education, were first applied on a large scale (Procacci 1991: 153-162, 164-5). Later, the concern with security and order became one of the cornerstones of colonial administration (see pp. 52-55) and of intentional development (Truman 1949; Hettne 2010).¹¹³ It has found its most explicit expressions in the post-conflict and peacebuilding literature, which, as noted above (see Chapter 3), tends to portray ex-combatants as a security problem. Such fears have also abounded in earlier perceptions of 'veterans' in diverse contexts. (McMullin 2013a: 45-77; see also Schafer 2007: 12-13). Hence, the Namibian depictions of the threat posed by ex-combatants have historical precedents and are also linked with a widespread, globally circulating discourse.

This is not primarily a result of direct donor involvement in Namibian reintegration, as it has been mostly funded, planned and executed domestically. At various points, some financial assistance and advice has been received from donors and international agencies, for example, from the ILO, Sweden, the Netherlands, Cuba, the European Union (Colletta et al. 1996: 18-19, 211; Preston 1997), but in the final instance, Namibian authorities have had the last say. This made it possible, first, to embark on a large-scale programme of public ex-combatant employment, even in the face of international and domestic criticisms and warnings over budgetary constraints and the bloating of the civil service; and, second, to provide

11 May 1998; 'Hamutenya hassled, faces wrath of ex-combatants', *The Namibian*, 8 May 1998; 'Hostage drama rocks Oshakati', *The Namibian*, 9 July 1997.

For more recent threats, see 'War vets threaten land grab', *New Era*, 7 June 2007.

¹¹² Isaac Kaulinge, interviewed by the author, Windhoek, 14 July 2003.

¹¹³ Hettne (2010); see also Harry S. Truman's inaugural address, delivered on 20 January 1949 (http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm).

jobs and compensation in a partisan manner. However, the portrayal of ex-combatants as a security threat has been useful for justifying reintegration to both the international community and the domestic public as a matter of national interest and peace maintenance,¹¹⁴ giving it both a sense of urgency and an air of apparent neutrality. Apart from its resonances with the mainstream DDR discourse, the imagery of ex-combatants as a social problem also gains currency from the security concerns of the domestic elite. Against the background of socially and economically polarized Namibian society, many of the evils with which ex-combatants are associated – migration, crime, alcoholism, loosening of family ties, indiscipline, HIV/AIDS – have a prominent place in upper and middle class discourse as issues that pose a threat to the lifestyle of the elite, and, more generally, to the orderly course of development as modernization.

The other prevalent view of the ex-combatants casts them as liberation heroes. It is a part of a broader nationalist narrative of Namibian history that was produced during the liberation struggle and currently appears in official documents, political debates and the media alike.¹¹⁵ For example, in statements she gave in the Parliament in 1998 and 1999, Minister of Health and Social Services, Libertine Amathila justified the proposed War Veterans Subvention Bill in the following way:

[T]he people of Namibia, under the leadership of Swapo, took up arms to fight for the liberation of their motherland. This war...is a catalyst of independence, peace and stability...Ex-PLAN combatants...did not have time for education...Some of them bear evidence of the war to this date...[T]heir contribution makes this bill a moral and ethical imperative. These are the people who braved the hazards of nature...[and] who engaged the enemy militarily...[T]hey are the ones who sacrificed their education, sacrificed their everything and we have to look after them.¹¹⁶

As can be seen from this quotation, the view of ex-combatants as heroes of national liberation was closely connected with the idea of sacrifice: the idea that they were

¹¹⁴ Donor representatives and external analysts readily shared in this interpretation; e.g. Colletta et al. (1996: 206, 209); Dzinesa (2008: 8).

¹¹⁵ For closer analysis, see Chapter 8.

¹¹⁶ Debates of the National Assembly 30/1998 and 32/1999. Nahas Angula, Minister of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology, supported the Bill with the following words on 3 November 1998: '[T]his Bill is not just about alleviating the economic and social plight of the veterans, it is a Bill to affirm and reaffirm their contribution made and their sacrifices...When we sing the National Anthem we are singing about the heroes – these veterans. When we affirm here our commitment to the Constitution, we are affirming to their contribution, because that Constitution is there as a symbol of their sacrifice...[It is] our moral obligation to make sure that some of these people...who have lost their limbs or lost their parents, husband, wives, can live comfortably in the country which is of their creation.' (Debates of the National Assembly 31/1998.)

victims of circumstances that had subjected them to hard conditions, danger and injuries as well as prevented them from gaining education and civilian skills that would enable them to produce their own livelihoods. Hence, a debt was owed to these ‘forgotten heroes’ (Gleichmann 1994b). This language of (military) heroism has mainly been directed at the home audience with policymakers garnering public support for reintegration by framing the question of ex-combatants as a moral issue at the centre of the nation’s historical identity.¹¹⁷ The language of liberation and its imagery of military heroism have also been directed at the ex-combatants themselves as a form of recognition and containment, seeking to maintain their loyalty to the ruling party and keeping their public remembrance within the contours of the liberation narrative.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, this portrayal of the ex-combatants has by no means been a mere top-down strategy. On the contrary, the ex-combatants themselves have consistently referred to it over the years, reminding others of their sacrifices.¹¹⁹ This was not merely a tactical choice intended to soften the hearts of policymakers and the public, but a narrative that also has considerable existential significance for the ex-combatants themselves.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Many opposition MPs questioned the view of PLAN ex-combatants as *the* heroes of the nation, arguing that the liberation war was also waged inside the country and therefore one should not focus exclusively on those who fought in exile. See e.g. M. Stuart, 3 November 1998 (Debates of the National Assembly 31/1998); V. Kaura, 10 November 1998 (Debates of the National Assembly 31/1998); K. Kaura, 23 April 1999 (Debates of the National Assembly 33/1999). The mutually opposing views were played out also in the everyday discussions between ‘returnees’ and ‘remainees’.

¹¹⁸ I deal with this issue in detail in Chapter 8.

¹¹⁹ For example, a representative of demonstrating disabled PLAN ex-combatants, Gabes Amukoshi, said, reading their petition to Swapo Coordinator in the Oshana Region, Clemens Kashiupulwa: ‘When is Swapo and the Government going to recognise us? Parts of our bodies were left in the soil of Angola, Namibia and Zambia where we were fighting for the liberation of our country.’ ‘Increasing the stakes: War disabled want N\$75 000 each’, *The Namibian*, 28 October 1997; ‘Disabled Namibia War Veterans Want Money’, *Electronic Mail and Guardian*, 28 October 1997.

Kruger points out a similar process in Zimbabwe where the notions of sacrifice and deservedness also converged into a special status for the veterans: ‘Is it fair to speak of guerrilla privilege when the guerrillas never saw themselves as privileged? The guerrillas, along with their supporters, who were often ex-combatants with political clout, were more apt to talk...of victimhood, discrimination, and the failure of society and government to recognize their war contribution...To understand guerrillas’ self-depiction as “forgotten and neglected”, it is important to appreciate their frames of reference, their belief that they deserved to be rewarded for war service, and their conviction that their war contributions were superior to those of other groups who participated in the liberation struggle—all ideas that were endorsed initially by the ruling party for its own purposes.’ (Kruger 2003: 187.)

¹²⁰ This aspect came across strongly in the interviews and discussions conducted with ex-combatants for this study. It can also be concluded from documentation of military narratives from the ‘struggle days’ in the postcolonial public sphere (e.g. Namakalu 2004).

In sum, a few distinct ways of speaking about the ex-combatants have appeared in justifications of reintegration and public debate in Namibia. The first portrays ex-combatants as victims of displacement and violent backgrounds, of missed education and work opportunities, of various social ills, and of discrimination in their communities. The second register sees former combatants from both sides as a threat to the social and political fabric, as idle, economically unproductive, psychically unstable, sexually irresponsible, and prone to drunkenness, violence and crime.¹²¹ The solution lies in registering, training and employing, and thereby disciplining and civilising them. The third language is derived from the narrative of liberation struggle and casts Swapo ex-combatants – but not their former SWATF and Koevoet opponents – as heroes who sacrificed themselves for national liberation. It has provided support for claims by certain ex-combatant groups associated with Swapo and facilitated their preferential treatment by the authorities, while the ‘social problem’ of ex-combatants justified targeting them while leaving other needy groups unattended. Political considerations and the register of liberation heroism have further led to divisions among those potentially classifiable as ex-combatants, with unemployed male ex-PLAN combatants always at the core of reintegration. It is only a short distance from the discourse of victimhood to the languages framing ex-combatants as a social problem or as heroes, since the very personal histories, deficits and grievances that cast them as victims are also associated with the perception of them as a security threat or, through a more sympathetic lens, as heroes who sacrificed their own well-being and opportunities for a greater cause. The ex-combatants have readily appropriated these perceptions. In their demands for material benefits and recognition of their sacrifice and status, they have backed their demands by resorting both to their central position as heroes in the dominant history of the nation and to their perceived potential for violence.

There is also a temporal dimension to the use of these languages as, over time, the securitizing portrayal of ex-combatants as a threat has gradually given way to their portrayal as veteran heroes. At the stage of the initial institutionalization of the ex-combatant issue in the 1990s, the three perceptions of ex-combatants as a security threat, as helpless and needy victims of a violent past, and as national

¹²¹ See Jensen (2005) and Schafer (2007: 4, 168-170) for similar processes of labelling in South Africa and Mozambique.

heroes were all combined to ensure the broad acceptance of targeting ex-combatants. The discrimination that took place was not statutory but informal. In the second stage of deepening institutionalization, particularly after 2006, Swapo ex-combatants – a global concept widely associated with the language of security – increasingly turned into veterans – an older concept that is not directly associated with current post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding vocabularies but with sacrifice, heroism and deservedness. The discrimination that has taken place at this stage has statutory grounding in the War Veterans Subvention Act of 1999 and the Veterans Act of 2008.

THE MUNDANE PRACTICES AND INSTRUMENTS OF REINTEGRATION

Discussion now turns to the practical ways in which interventions targeted ex-combatants. These include the creation of various beneficiary categories, call-ups and registrations, training and employment. Like the languages through which ex-combatants have been understood, such procedures are hardly local inventions unique to Namibia but, rather, techniques developed in the context of the modernising West and applied now in the context of a very different Namibian modernity. The point, however, is not to note this apparent similarity but to examine how and with what consequences they were used in the particular context of Namibian reintegration.

Registering and classifying the ex-combatants

Statistics and quantification of society have been an indispensable part of modern biopolitics since early efforts to manage the urban poor, the unemployed or any other ‘needy’ population segment (Porter 2002; Hacking 1991). They helped to standardize objects of study, including categories of people. Quantification also involved a move towards forms of knowledge that privilege the objective and the impersonal. Since the late-nineteenth century, the notion of the ‘population’ has been disaggregated to allow for more detailed knowledge regarding the character

and conditions of various subpopulations and, hence, for targeted interventions to improve their lot.

Namibian ex-combatant reintegration is a prime example of a biopolitical activity in the sense of its framing a specific segment of the population as its object, producing particular forms of knowledge concerning these people with the aim of controlling, disciplining and grooming them in the name of general socio-economic well-being and security. In line with such biopolitics, the implementation of Namibian reintegration consisted of mass call-ups, screening the applicants on the basis of official documents and interviews, and classifying them into categories on the basis of their socioeconomic status and life history, training, civic education, and work discipline. Creating databases was a major part of this exercise. At each new stage of reintegration, state actors found earlier lists incomplete or inaccurate due to the varying coverage of different registration exercises, shifting definitions of the ‘target population’ and the changing conditions of ex-combatants. Therefore, all new steps towards reintegration started with registration.¹²² For example, although ex-combatants had been registered in connection with earlier reintegration efforts, the Technical Committee concluded that ‘the absence of a reliable database has created many problems because the target population is not known. The database created by the Committee should be properly protected and developed further’ (Republic of Namibia 1998: 14) Indeed, the Technical Committee’s registration exercise continued throughout the years of the Peace Project. In the phase of registrations that started in 1998, such designators as ex-combatant,¹²³ ex-freedom fighter,¹²⁴ war veteran,¹²⁵ ex-SWATF, and war orphan¹²⁶ were defined and all applicants either had to fit one of these categories or fall outside the circle of beneficiaries.

Not all returnees would be classified as ex-combatants, however; not even all those who had been fighters during the war. ‘Ex-combatant’ was primarily a policy category referring to a person in need of assistance, with connotations of

¹²² See e.g. Colletta et al. (1996); Republic of Namibia (1998: 14); ‘Political perspective,’ *The Namibian*, 3 October 1997; ‘D-day for ex-fighters’, *The Namibian*, 30 October 1997. Moreover, in situations where demonstrating ex-combatants demanded immediate measures, registration was a concrete measure that gave credibility to the promises made to them and thereby helped to end the demonstrations.

¹²³ ‘Trained and deployed in combat formations’ (Republic of Namibia 1998: 6).

¹²⁴ Those who performed other duties under Swapo’s umbrella in exile (ibid.).

¹²⁵ Former PLAN combatants over 55 years of age or disabled (Republic of Namibia 1999).

¹²⁶ Children of deceased exiles (ibid.).

helplessness, dependency and low levels of education and skills. Those who aspired to 'ex-combatantness' were people who had something to gain from this identification, who were either unemployed, underemployed, unsuccessfully self-employed or not happy with their jobs. Those who had been successful in the job market or had otherwise made it on their own were generally not thought of as ex-combatants – although some of my high-ranking government interviewees would stress that in a way they also fell into the category. However, by this they were referring to their PLAN backgrounds and implying a continuing togetherness with, and responsibility for, their less fortunate colleagues from exile, rather than indicating that they too should be considered for benefits.¹²⁷

The 1998 registrations took place at designated regional registration points.¹²⁸ The ex-combatants were called up on the radio and had to get to the registration point on a certain date, sometimes over long distances. They queued for a personal interview where their background was scrutinized by registration and verification officers using a standard questionnaire and supplemented by the officials' intimate knowledge of Swapo in exile.¹²⁹ Because the documentary evidence on former exiles was often insufficient, the interviews charted applicants' life histories carefully.¹³⁰ There was also a counselling aspect involved. According to the Technical Committee, 'the verifying officer conduct [sic] counselling explaining in details the purpose of the exercise and possible course of action. Care has been taken not to raise unrealistic expectations. Issues like, family planning and child spacing, formalization of matrimonial union etc. were also addressed.' (Republic of Namibia 1998: 7.) This activity had a direct practical intent: 'As a result of counselling, the majority of the demonstrating former fighters who were at

¹²⁷ It should be noted that this has had a different outcome with regards veteran compensation payments, with numerous high-ranking officials and politicians among the claimants. See e.g. 'Internal fighters are also war vets', *New Era*, 20 February 2012; Herbert Jauch: 'The war veterans and social justice', *The Villager*, 13 February 2012.

¹²⁸ This requirement was experienced as inadequate and discriminatory to those in the outskirts, reflecting the ad hoc character and hastiness of the first round of registrations started in order to halt the huge demonstrations in Windhoek and Ondangwa. Attempts were made to broaden the reach in subsequent rounds.

¹²⁹ Republic of Namibia (1998: 7); Michael Kafidi, interviews 14 November 2002 and 4 August 2003; Niilo Taapopi, interview 18 November 2002.

¹³⁰ The registration form for former exiles covered personal particulars, history in Swapo, (military) training history, (military) service history, repatriation details, and employment history since repatriation. The form for former SWATF and Koevoet personnel only charted personal particulars and employment history since demobilization, as there was already a reliable database on them, inherited from the South African regime. Copies of both forms are in the author's possession.

the Windhoek Showground and Ondangwa Airport left for their home to go and wait' (ibid.: 7). However, such counselling also shows how reintegration combines regimenting biopolitics with governmental techniques that aim at reforming and civilizing its subjects.

Overall, the techniques of registration had the practical aim of systematically targeting ex-combatants with employment and other benefits; meanwhile, as an important side effect, they have formalized ex-combatant identity according to certain fixed criteria. This labelling of ex-combatants as a group with shared problems made state interventions possible as those who were accepted as being ex-combatants were issued with 'former PLAN combatant identification cards'. The registrations also brought about a shift in the valuation of ex-combatant identity. Initially, the ex-combatants were widely seen as heroes who helped in bringing about independence, but at the same time stigmatized as a burden to their families and as reckless and antisocial.¹³¹ When the registrations commenced and people realized that being registered was likely to lead to employment or other forms of benefit, ex-combatant status suddenly became desirable. According to many of the officials I interviewed, there were widespread attempts to 'cheat' whereby those not eligible would try to register themselves. Recognition of ex-combatant status was also emotionally rewarding: those who qualified were visibly happy whereas those who did not were deeply disappointed (Republic of Namibia 1998: 7-8, 13). The Technical Committee suggested

that all unemployed former fighters need emotional rehabilitation...Our observations of the elation after receiving the PLAN identification card in contrast with the disappointment of those who did not qualify testify to this need. Those [whose] prospects for enrolment in the unified forces has (sic) diminished, can be awarded honorary military ranks. (ibid.: 13.)

After registration, the ex-combatants were told to go home to wait until their cases were processed, which could take months, even years. They were then called up on the radio again, as well as being contacted through regional governors and local councillors' offices and SIPE representatives. The next step was to report for duty, or to go for screening where their medical status and suitability for placement was

¹³¹ See the Technical Committee report that refers to 'a general perception among Namibians that ex-combatants have no skills, or initiative whatsoever and can only be assisted through somebody else' (Republic of Namibia 1998: 10).

checked. There was also training for many of the jobs, notable examples being the army and the police.

The ways of meeting the state – or, where and who is the state?

Before the Peace Project was implemented, the ex-combatants did not only stage mass demonstrations but also constantly visited the offices of local Swapo representatives and local councillors, even governors, reminding them of the promises made in exile about better living standards (e.g. houses and cars), education and jobs after independence and demanding that the party finally deliver on those promises; instead, they were (as it was repeatedly phrased) ‘always told to wait’.¹³² This placed the officials in a difficult position and it appears that they pleaded with the central government to act and sometimes supported the demonstrating ex-combatants by providing transport, food or money. At the time of my fieldwork, those ex-combatants who were still unemployed continued to come to these offices.

The Peace Project, the registrations and official ex-combatant policy in general provided a way to refer these needy former comrades to a formal, less personal framework of assistance, although, in practice, one strongly influenced by the particular history of connections between former exiles and the current government, relations reflected in the implementation of reintegration. Here the frontline functionaries or street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 2010) of the state and the ruling party, such as members of the Technical Committee, governors and councillors, and Swapo party representatives played an important role. They encountered the demands of the ex-combatants on the ground and carried out the measures aimed at their reintegration. In this way, they gave a face to an abstract state but also made the people visible to the state through their activities and reporting. To varying degrees, they occupy positions that place them among the people, embedded in local conditions and social relations, at the same time as they are seemingly above them, inserted in broader networks of government. Hence, the ostensibly bureaucratic practices of reintegration often became highly personalized.

¹³² This was pointed out to me by many ex-combatants, as well as by some local level officials.

Swapo ex-combatants and former exiles did not encounter neutral and faceless bureaucratic machinery but people they knew as comrades and former commanders. The party was 'calling' them and finally taking care of them again. Furthermore, registrations and SIPE activities often took place in Swapo offices.¹³³ Obviously, for former SWATF and Koevoet fighters, these registration arrangements and other encounters with the implementers of reintegration did not appear friendly or promising.¹³⁴

In the case of Swapo ex-combatants, the registrations reinforced the history and imagery of liberation struggle. In the absence of extensive records and identity documents, it drew heavily on personal memory through interviews where the details of the interviewee's life history were carefully charted. This process was conducive to intermingling personal identity with an official, technical one and the label of ex-combatant. It encouraged the ex-combatants to see participation in the liberation struggle as the major phase in their lives that still determined their futures. Thus, in addition to the registers of ex-combatants as victims, as heroes and as a social problem, there is a fourth view that sees them as 'our brothers, sisters, and children', laying stress on shared history and fulfilment of promises made in exile in return for continuing loyalty and order.

This expectation of a continuing relationship of mutual closeness and support is widely shared by the former exiles. Even when the ex-combatants have become restless, demonstrated, complained and put forward demands over the years, they have still emphasized their loyalty to the ruling party, especially the President, in the idiom of familiness that developed in exile. For example, in 1995, 'five people who spoke on behalf of the group [of demonstrating ex-combatants] told President Nujoma they had been forced by hunger and poverty to speak to him as their leader, whom they regarded as father and mother, to see whether he could help them'.¹³⁵

¹³³ For example, in 1995 ex-combatants were called to register at Swapo headquarters. In Oshakati I noticed that the regional representative of SIPE was placed at the Swapo regional office. SIPE was also telling orphans to verify their status at Swapo offices; in only three out of 13 regions the verifying office was not the Swapo office. See 'President pledges action on jobs for fighters', *The Namibian*, 18 May 1995; announcement on 'verification of war orphans registry' by the SIPE Company in *The Namibian*, 28 November 1997.

¹³⁴ Former Swapo combatants also put pressure on the authorities not to accept their former enemies as reintegration beneficiaries. For example, in 1997, demonstrating ex-combatants rejected the government's master list of ex-combatants on the grounds that it also contained ex-SWATF and Koevoet; 'Ex-guerrilla protest keeps growing', *The Namibian* 7 July 1997.

¹³⁵ 'Anger mounts among ex-Plan combatants', *The Namibian*, 17 May 1995.

The Technical Committee on Ex-combatants recognized these expectations, portraying the ex-combatants from a paternalist administrative perspective:

Some of the freedom fighters left the country at a tender age and do not know any other life except the one provided under the care of SWAPO... The returning Namibian exiles were ill prepared psychologically to start a new independence [sic] life. They expected to be taken care of like in exile... Some still felt bound by the military rules of PLAN waiting to be 'commanded'. This in part explains the widely held view among the former fighters that 'SWAPO shall come one day'.¹³⁶

From this perspective, the ex-combatant demonstrations, far from questioning the authority of the Swapo government, in fact strengthened it, portraying it as the sole agency that could solve the problem. Through characterising the issue as a national security problem as well as a question of assisting the most helpless and needy, the government could attract public support for maintaining the loyalty of its strategically positioned core supporters, Swapo's former combatants. In an exceptionally straightforward admission of the political benefits of the proposed programme to Swapo, thereby mixing considerations of public welfare with those of the ruling party, the first report of the Technical Committee on Ex-Combatants notes that

because of correct political understanding, most of the genuine ex PLAN combatants did not participate in any demonstration. They continued to hope that one day, SWAPO shall remember them ... The arrival of the Committee had a pacifying effect on the former combatants and will pay divide[n]d during the forthcoming regional elections. (Republic of Namibia 1998: 13.)

This passage reveals the close connections between the government and Swapo in the perceptions of ex-combatants and Committee members alike. According to its wording, the ex-combatants were waiting for Swapo to assist them and when the Committee arrived, it was seen as representing the ruling party. However, the Committee also warned that the legitimacy of the Swapo government would be in danger unless the ex-combatants were urgently taken care of:

The Committee believes that the above proposals if considered and worked out could go a long way in finding a lasting solution to the plight of the former freedom fighters and if possible they should be considered within the short period of time. It should be emphasised that the current exercise has invoked new hope and expectations and might be the last opportunity to retain confidence in the government. (Republic of Namibia 1998: 16.)

¹³⁶ Republic of Namibia (1998: 3, 14).

Government employment as the preferred form of reintegration

Namibian ex-combatant reintegration has mainly operated through government employment. Ex-combatant demands and government programmes have focused much less on farmland, monetary compensation, vocational training, soft credit or other forms of support, although these too have formed part of the repertoire of reintegration mechanisms. Why is this the case? At one level, the answer is simple. Public employment was the meeting point of supply and demand in reintegration. Jobs were foremost in the list of ex-combatant demands and public employment was something that was easy for the government to provide. It could not transform the ex-combatants into entrepreneurs or force their employment by the private sector but it could remobilize them in the service of the armed forces and the police or give them jobs in ministries and public agencies. It was only after public employment had been provided to most eligible ex-combatants that their demands, and the focus of veteran policies, shifted towards monetary compensation. The programmes that specifically catered for the ex-combatants played an important part in turning them into an interest group that could over time remobilize around a new set of grievances and demands. Jobs and compensation, in other words, were not alternatives but were, rather, complementary, meaning that attention could turn to the latter once the former had been taken care of.

However, public employment also constitutes the relationship between ex-combatants and the state in ways that explain its centrality in reintegration. Over the 1990s, ex-combatant policies gradually became increasingly paternalistic. The original approach was that the ex-combatants would make it on their own after demobilization. Under pressure from ex-combatant groups, this was soon abandoned for the Development Brigade that, in principle, aimed to empower the ex-combatants to function as individual economic actors in the job market or as small entrepreneurs.¹³⁷ In practice, the DB/DBC replicated the militaristic hierarchy and social organization that the ex-combatants were familiar with from exile. Indeed,

¹³⁷ A similar idea underpinned The Socioeconomic Integration Fund that aimed at providing start-up funding for small businesses and hence increasing ex-combatant self-sufficiency. 'Fund for ex-fighters gets off the ground', *The Namibian*, 10 August 1995.

employment creation has leaned even more strongly towards containing ex-combatant agency, seeking to pacify ex-combatants with jobs whose demands do not stray far from their duties and social situation in exile. As the Technical Committee on Ex-Combatants put it: 'It is only the uniformed services that would be able to absorb the ex combatants because of the prevalence of a regimented and highly disciplined regime in the regulations of these institutions' (Republic of Namibia n.d. [2001]: 13). On the basis of this conviction, the army and the police have been the two biggest ex-combatant employers under the Peace Project. Rather than being a response to the personnel needs of these or other branches of the public sector, job provision for ex-combatants and former fighters has clearly been a matter of social and security policy. The jobs for ex-combatants have mainly been additional posts created specifically for them and therefore the numbers of army, police, as well as other public service personnel have grown considerably.¹³⁸ Perhaps this is why prospective employers were not very enthusiastic about taking ex-combatants on board. The ministries absorbed the numbers allocated to them by Cabinet decisions but often only after delays. Efforts by SIPE and the Technical Committee to persuade other agencies to incorporate ex-combatants yielded negligible results. The taming and rechanneling of ex-combatant agency worked to the degree that after the

¹³⁸ This was noted by Minister of Defence, Erkki Nghimtina, in Parliament on 29 April 1999: 'Cabinet, on recommendation of its Technical Committee on Ex-combatants, has resolved that the MOD employ a considerable number of registered ex-fighters in the NDF this financial year...Cabinet decision to employ ex-fighters came as a result of the government policy to provide jobs to the ex-combatants. Their recruitment, therefore, did not necessarily address the NDF's prior need to recruit young and energetic soldiers between the ages of 18 and 25. On this basis, our pre-programme of recruiting younger faces in the force remains unaffected.' (Debates of the National Assembly 33/1999.)

Major General Martin Shalli made a similar point (interview 7 November 2002):

MS: Once a political decision is made...you don't have a choice to say ...how old they should be...Age doesn't matter, but you know when you [are] 50...or...55 years old...your physical fitness is questionable in the military, but you have to accept them and deploy them accordingly, give them light duties and so forth, because it's part of the nation building. You don't say this doesn't go to the standards like when you recruit young people...Those go through extensive medical check-up regime to make sure that they meet the requirements...But the ex-combatants you just have to accept.

LM: Yeah, there were also no educational requirements regarding them, I mean background education?

MS: No no, we don't say... 'ok, it's minimum grade twelve', no, you can't do that...because you have to look at the very history of our country...you can't write that off and that's why the decision has been politically defined.

Similarly, Minister of Defence Charles Namoloh stated that the recruitment of 'struggle children' came at the cost of compromising educational and health standards normally applied in recruitment; 'NDF not a job agency', *The Namibian*, 1 February 2012 and 'Hundreds of struggle kids join army', *New Era*, 31 January 2012.

implementation of the Peace Project there were no major demonstrations by people claiming to be ex-combatants for nearly ten years.

In a situation where employment opportunities are scarce, their provision appears a privilege and therefore a marker of economic citizenship. Thus, employment is not solely an economic category but also a political one that concerns the government in the sense of forging relations between authorities and citizens (see Chipkin 2003; Cruikshank 1999; Walters 2000). As Mbembe (2001: 45; see also Roitman 2007: 203) argued concerning the construction of postcolonial ‘commandement’:

[T]he salary...acted as a resource the state could use to buy obedience and gratitude and to break the population to habits of discipline. The salary was what legitimated not only subjection but also the constitution of a type of political exchange based, not on the principle of political equality and equal representation, but on the existence of claims through which the state created debts on society.

Unlike in many other African contexts, where the salary as a mechanism of redistribution has often given way to securing positions in ‘shadow’ or ‘parallel’ economic networks, in Namibia public jobs still remain an important redistributive mechanism while informal, parallel or ‘illegal’ economic activities offer avenues for those unable – or unwilling – to secure official jobs. The harnessing of ex-combatant agency through public employment has taken many forms. Those who aspired to be counted as ex-combatants and former fighters utilized their ‘ex-combatantness’ to argue for employment as a right and saw government employment as a reward for, and token of, loyalty. The classification and registration of applicants draw lines between inclusion and exclusion while counselling and training has further sought to reform the conduct of those included. Once the ex-combatants were employed, they and often a considerable number of extended family members depended on their salary. Regimented ex-combatant jobs have contributed to identifying with the party and the state through their repetitious practices and discipline and because they are reminiscent of the environment wherein ex-combatants lived prior to independence. Furthermore, government employment, as a form of inclusion and recognition, has facilitated the continuation of a life-historical narrative built around participating in the liberation struggle. In these ways, the strategic group of Swapo ex-combatants

have been accommodated and their fates tied to the current regime.¹³⁹ This process has had both individuating and deindividuating tendencies. On the one hand, reintegration through job provision has sought to dispel the potentially rebellious or subversive collective agency of the ex-combatants and place them in an individuated, direct relationship with the central government through the techniques of registration, training, work discipline and the salary. On the other hand, many of the ex-combatant jobs have provided them with closely-knit working and living environments that reinforces their identity as Swapo cadres and comrades.

However, these functions of employment should be understood as invitations and objects of negotiation rather than as automatic operations. As it turned out in my discussions with ex-combatants, they rank available jobs in terms of desirability, with the uniformed services usually at the top and cleaning jobs at the bottom. Tactics that the authorities see as ‘misconduct’, such as refusal to accept offered jobs, failing to perform, or trying to swap into better jobs, have continually marred reintegration. Furthermore, it turned out to be difficult to justify and verify the condition of being unemployed¹⁴⁰ in Namibian conditions where a substantial amount of economic activity is informal and employment is often temporary or part-time. Therefore, people who were not completely unemployed often managed to register themselves and benefit from the schemes. In some cases, the official line slipped to the extent that some ex-combatants were allowed to register although it was known that they were already employed. For example, the Technical Committee final report notes, when discussing people who had been registered: ‘[S]ome who were employed by DBC, Namibia Protection Services, other security companies and a host of other institutions decided to stay put [in their jobs]’ (Republic of Namibia n.d. [2001]: 5).¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ As van de Walle and Scott (2011: 13) argue, ‘the vast scholarship on the role of politics, political appointments, spoils etc. in administrations demonstrates the extent to which the provision of public services and of positions within them is a key element in political power-brokering and accommodation...By providing a clear path for social mobility, public sector employment has contributed to social harmony and has promoted citizens’ identification with the state...Sharing out public-sector jobs or a promise to provide certain facilities to certain individuals, groups or regions is an excellent instrument to cement political pacts.’

¹⁴⁰ See e.g. ‘Regions to register ex-fighters’, *The Namibian*, 29 May 1995; ‘Political perspective’, *The Namibian*, 3 October 1997.

¹⁴¹ It might be that they were registered with a view of providing them employment if and when the DBC and its offshoots became non-operational, as was foreseen (e.g. Republic of Namibia n.d. [2001]: 13). Another explanation for registering already employed ex-combatants is provided by a letter from Salute Enterprises (a Swapo-related security company) to the Chairperson of the

Such fluctuations and problems of coverage, often referred to as targeting leakages, together with ex-combatants reaching retirement age, have ensured that even large-scale programmes of employment provision and compensation have not completely incorporated all potential beneficiaries: bringing the ex-combatants into the 'social and economic mainstream' of Namibian society is, therefore, not a *fait accompli*, but rather a long-term interplay of recurrent demands and attempts at 'conducting their conduct'. The 'cheaters', that is, those who have tried to get ex-combatant jobs although they are not considered eligible, or those who fail to take up offered jobs or to stay in them over time, stand in stark contrast, in the view of the officials, to those seen as genuine heroes,¹⁴² and while there is room for accommodating particular needs and interests in reintegration, there has also been considerable bureaucratic stringency involved in how rules have been followed and applied. There has been a comparable duality in official responses to ex-combatant agency that ranges between considering their demonstrations and demands as anybody's constitutional right, or as subversive troublemaking.¹⁴³ Together, these dualities reveal the extent to which reintegration has been, from the point of view of

Technical Committee in February 1999. In the letter, Salute Enterprises pleads that a number of ex-combatants employed in one of its branches be registered because they want 'to be recognised as bona fide ex-combatants' and because 'the situation is near desperate and could get out of hand'. This points to the importance of the symbolic dimension of registration as official recognition of ex-combatant identity, but also to the perception that official recognition could be translated into welfare and security in the future.

¹⁴² See, for example, 'Nujoma lashes out at divisive forces', speech by Sam Nujoma, reproduced in *Die Republikein*, 26 July 2006 and quoted above on pp. 112-113.

¹⁴³ For illustrations, see e.g. SIPE General Manager Nghidinihamba Ndilula's public statements in connection with the 1997 demonstrations; 'The jobs roll in...but some ex-fighters "job shy"', *The Namibian*, 2 October 1997; 'Fighters in yet another war of words...', *The Namibian*, 24 October 1997; 'Jobs flood in for ex-fighters', *The Namibian*, 27 October 1997. He responded to my question about consulting the ex-combatants in the same vein:

NN: Demonstration is a democratic way of living, accepted by our constitution. Everybody has a right to do so, and they have the right to organize so that their voice can be heard...

LM: Right. To what extent have the policy formulations of the government been done in consultation with some representatives of the ex-combatants' groups?

NN: What do you mean by representatives of some combatants groups, we don't know them? SIPE is the official representative of ex-combatants.

LM: Yes, but I mean...for instance referring still to demonstrations, there have always been spokesmen there...

NN: Oh...the time of demonstrations. I did mention that that's their right, they come and give the petition, but no, we are officially there to represent them and respond by finding jobs for them. There was no need to our ministers or government of President to go and negotiate with them, negotiate for what. If the government have already put up...SIPE to operate...[A]ll the groups...put up by the government to operate and work for ex-combatants are mandated to do so and have done so.

the authorities, an attempt to tame ex-combatant agency that reflects deep-seated ideas about rank, obedience and discipline.

INCLUSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS IN REINTEGRATION

Indeed, the very idea of inappropriate targeting or targeting leakages is misguided in the sense of speaking of politically and pragmatically motivated definitions as a technical problem of insufficient coverage (see e.g. Kostner and Bowles 2004: 3). Namibian definitions and redefinitions of ex-combatantness and veteranhood have resulted less from technical mistakes than from the inherent difficulty of clearly defining who is an ex-combatant: the criteria are not clear-cut and universal but depend on definitional, ultimately political choices. Thus, while I argue that the trajectory of Namibian ex-combatant reintegration should be understood as a long and ongoing negotiation between the ex-combatants and the political authorities, I contend that it cannot be fully understood without looking at its residuals, and the borderline cases that highlight its politics of inclusion and exclusion. There have been important internal differences within the population potentially classifiable as ex-combatants or veterans, both in terms of what they have expected and demanded from political authorities and in terms of how the authorities have treated them.¹⁴⁴

The initial definition of ex-combatant or veteran as a person who served in the military was gradually extended to cover practically all grown-up former exiles, turning a significant number of women into mainstream reintegration beneficiaries. Encouraged by this, groups of ‘struggle kids’ have pressed for inclusion within the orbit of veteran policies since the late 1990s and, as noted above, have had a degree of success. The firmest line of inclusion and exclusion has run between former Swapo exiles and ex-SWATF and Koevoet fighters. The latter have faced both formal and informal discrimination at various stages of the reintegration trajectory: when the new integrated security forces recruited their personnel, in the intake of the DB/DBC, in the registrations and job placements of the Peace Project, and in the veteran legislation of 1999 and 2007. Indeed, the overall level of formal employment among former SWATF and Koevoet has remained considerably lower than among former exiles. According to LeBeau (2005: 72-73), 69.2% of former

¹⁴⁴ I will address this issue in more detail in Chapter 8.

Swapo combatants are formally employed, compared to 45.6% of former SWATF and Koevoet. Most formally employed Swapo combatants have a government job, whereas former SWATF and Koevoet fighters are mainly employed by private security companies. The view was expressed by some of my interviewees, as well as appearing in public statements made by opposition politicians and others in the media, that ex-combatant reintegration has been guided by political considerations and that Swapo had favoured the former PLAN combatants and other former exiles in order to preserve their support and, through them, legitimacy across the general public, particularly in the north-central regions where most former exiles had their roots and kinship ties.

In sum, the justifications and practices of reintegration have spoken two languages simultaneously. It has often been portrayed as a neutral, bureaucratic exercise in line with ideas about post-conflict reconstruction, motivated by a supposedly universal security risk; in other words, something that could in principle take place in a more or less similar way anywhere. At the same time, some policy lines and political statements as well as the implementation of reintegration has conveyed clear messages of a continued bond between Swapo and its former exile cadres, justified by the ideas of nationalist struggle and sacrifice. The combination of these languages might appear contradictory but it has actually created room for politicians and state functionaries to modify their messages according to context and audience, speaking of the ex-combatants as a security risk when opportune and as national heroes when that seems more suitable.

Overall, the primary designator of treatment in reintegration has been political affiliation (which side one took during the war), followed by age, and only then gender. The fact that former PLAN combatants and other former exiles have predominantly been catered for by reintegration reflects the immediate security priorities of the Namibian political elite. However, one may ponder whether this prioritization is sufficient for long-term political and socioeconomic stability. In different ways, the groups that have had a more complicated relationship with reintegration, such as former SWATF and Koevoet fighters, or the youth, as well as Swapo ex-combatants who have opted out of reintegration (and whom I discuss in Chapter 8) are examples of tensions beneath the calm surface of Namibian political and social life and may challenge existing power relations in time to come. Furthermore, these challenges might be more difficult to deal with than that posed

by former Swapo exiles who demanded a (re)inclusion in the state and party ranks through employment and other benefits.

CONCLUSION: THE POLITICS OF BIOPOLITICS

Namibian ex-combatant reintegration is an early case of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. However, closer examination of the Namibian DDR process reveals important differences from many other cases of DDR and from the standard reintegration narrative which largely stem from the institutional context in which reintegration takes place, particularly the historically evolved characteristics and capacity of the state. The prevailing generalizations about ex-combatants and their agency are extrapolated from particular cases, mainly those that are often called failed or fragile states or situations. A history of weak centralization, the importance of informal politics and relations of patronage, limited resources and room for manoeuvre, and, therefore, the significance of external templates and actors characterize many African situations, particularly in West and Central Africa. This combination of factors contribute to explaining the community orientation of many DDR processes that take place in such contexts, as well as the fact that the collective agency of ex-combatants therein tends to rely on informal peer networks to facilitate economic and political opportunities rather than those that offer access to already existing institutions or contribute to existing regimes.¹⁴⁵ The planning and implementation of reintegration programmes in these contexts have also tended to involve UN and other international agencies in prominent roles and thus have striven for political neutrality, predominantly treating ex-combatants as a security risk and seeking to dissolve their orientation instead of institutionalizing it as veteranhood.¹⁴⁶ In line with this, they have, therefore, downplayed ex-combatant political agency and stressed the social and economic aspects of reintegration.

¹⁴⁵ For an example of ex-combatant networks as a vehicle of primitive accumulation and political organization in West Africa, see Reno (2009); for an example of ex-combatant networks used for generating peaceful livelihoods in Liberia, see Boås and Bjorkhaug (2010).

¹⁴⁶ This does not preclude the possibility of their domestic institutionalization as veterans if and when political conditions and resources permit. Even in contexts where there is strong international involvement with the associated expectations of demilitarization, democratization and impartiality, local players have at times striven to establish a category of respected, heroic veterans alongside that of deserving and troublesome ex-combatants. This has happened for example in South Sudan (Lamb 2012: 59).

The ideas of the global post-conflict and DDR industry have certainly made inroads into the official planning and explanations of Namibian reintegration, as evidenced in the view of ex-combatants as a volatile and potentially dangerous group that could again resort to violence, in advice from donors and international agencies, in the setting up of seemingly neutral government agencies such as the Socio-economic Integration Programme for Ex-combatants (SIPE) or the Technical Committee on Ex-combatants, or in the bureaucratic mechanisms through which the 'beneficiaries' were to be selected and reintegrated. The wide circulation of the view of ex-combatants as a security threat undoubtedly facilitated its adoption in the Namibian context.

However, in Namibia, the portrayal of ex-combatants as a threat, as a problem requiring urgent intervention, was combined with the domestic capacity to register, train, employ and compensate people classified as ex-combatants or veterans. Due to the relative strength of the Namibian state in terms of both administrative capacity and available resources, reintegration in the country was predominantly run by governmental bodies and remained relatively independent of international agencies. This gave the Namibian government considerable room to make its own choices in planning, targeting and implementing reintegration. Hence, it was possible to diverge from mainstream DDR programmes and attempt to solve the ex-combatant question with broad-based public employment, an approach that, as McMullin (2013a: 89) notes, has not been tried anywhere else. Furthermore, it was the outcome of negotiations over recognition and benefits between former exiles and the current political elite who mainly have backgrounds in Swapo leadership in exile. It reflected the meeting of government and Swapo ex-combatant interests: the demands of the ex-combatants to be employed and the desire of the government to pacify them in a way that places them in a relationship of long-term dependence on the government. The intention of ex-combatant employment was clearly not merely to provide livelihoods and economic productivity, but also to harness a problematic source of agency through counselling, training, salary and work discipline. The registrations, job placements and compensation payments undertaken by Namibian reintegration agencies have promoted direct, individual links between ex-combatants and state authorities in a way that reintegration run by NGOs and international agencies or based on informal networks could not do. The bureaucratic techniques of reintegration, then, are an example of extending and

consolidating state power and citizenship through disciplinary and persuasive biopolitical measures but this has happened selectively and in a way that blurs distinctions between state and party.

Thus, although reintegration was directed at maintaining social order through assisting and disciplining ex-combatants, this did not happen neutrally but was actually driven by local political dynamics. Through reintegration, the Swapo government consolidated its hold on its core supporters and the state security apparatus by employing ex-combatants in the public service, especially the uniformed services. This form of recognition enhanced former Swapo exiles' ties to the state and the ruling party in many ways. First, it made them the privileged object of welfare interventions (secure permanent employment, pensions and other benefits) on a scale exceptional in the Namibian context. Second, it affirmed the close intertwining of party and state, not least because frontline state officials, such as those conducting registrations, often held party offices as well. Third, public employment entailed multiple and continuous forms of discipline that would seek to harness ex-combatant agency by establishing a continuous and intensive relation between the ex-combatant and the party-state. At the same time, however, it facilitated the continuation and strengthening of a particular Swapo ex-combatant identity and thus prepared the ground for further demands. Through the operation of degrees of exclusion, however, reintegration sent a different message to young returnees and especially to the former SWATF and Koevoet fighters.

Hence, the Namibian reintegration experience demonstrates that the biopolitical and bureaucratic operations of the modern state are not necessarily apersonalized and depoliticising. Rather, they are malleable and can be put to use for various purposes in various contexts. Consistent with this pattern, many of the political effects put in train by the treatment of ex-combatants have been produced through ostensibly neutral administrative techniques and have become part of deeply political processes of selective inclusion (and exclusion) on the basis of particular personal and group histories and political allegiance. Undoubtedly, the exclusions that have occurred in the context of Namibian reintegration do not amount to a complete denial of citizenship, as, for example, in the case of 'illegal' immigrants; they do not stem from citizenship *de jure* but from the practical benefits that accrue through realizing one's relationship with public authority and that are themselves inscribed in legal provisions such as the Veterans Act. In this context, by speaking

of the threat posed by abstract ‘ex-combatants’, the language of DDR came in handy for neutralizing and justifying a process that actually differentiated between groups of them. The securitization of ex-combatants told the domestic public and the international community alike that this was an issue requiring urgent action by responsible leaders who have expert knowledge of former Swapo fighters and exiles – those who voiced their grievances most visibly – by virtue of sharing the same background in exile. In this interpretation, the Swapo government appears as the regulator of potential violence and unrest and a guarantor of peace. This was combined, for domestic audiences, with referring to Swapo ex-combatants as heroes of the nation to whom a moral debt is owed, offering a rationale for why not just any ex-combatants but Swapo ex-combatants in particular deserved recognition.

My Namibian evidence – and other detailed studies of particular reintegration experiences – would suggest that reintegration is inevitably embedded in local socio-political realities and that its ostensible neutrality is a depoliticising effect of the DDR discourse and instruments rather than a deviation from the normal course of events. In other words, despite ‘post-conflict reconstruction’ and reintegration being portrayed as universally applicable packages of neutral administrative techniques, in practice they are deeply enmeshed – and their concepts utilized – in local symbolic and material politics (cf. Ferguson 1990). In the Namibian setting, this can be seen in the selection of beneficiaries and the exclusion of some segments of potential ‘reintegers’, in the preferred modes of reintegration (mass, public, mainly uniformed employment), as well as the practices of its implementation (the mundane encounters between ‘reintegers’ and ‘reintegrators’). The politics of reintegration have differentiated between groups of ex-combatants and privileged those who can associate themselves with Swapo and the historical narrative of national liberation.

Here, the notion of a national liberation struggle has provided an alternative framework for understanding the role and character of former military personnel. Contrary to the imagery of new wars that are portrayed as complicated conflicts within (and often also across) national boundaries, a liberation struggle appears as one between a nation and its oppressor and, hence, supports dichotomies between the good and the bad, between (domestic) heroes and (foreign) villains: an echo from an older world where organized violence could still be seen as an extension of politics instead of mere pathology. Instead of a problematic and potentially

dangerous group, ex-combatants turned war veterans can then be seen as national heroes. To a degree, the discrimination justified by this dichotomous take on history has happened at the level of legislation and policymaking, but also at different stages and levels of implementation. Despite being state or government organs, SIPE and the Technical Committee on Ex-combatants were actually closely related to the ruling party, with personnel drawn from the ranks of formerly exiled Swapo members of the bureaucracy and security organs, and cooperating with Swapo offices in the regions. At times the close ties were openly stated in the documents of these agencies. The officials involved in planning and implementing reintegration had long-standing and close relations with Swapo ex-combatants.

Another issue worth noting concerns the collective agency of ex-combatants. The tendency of ex-combatant networks to survive through transitions to peace has been noted across many different reintegration contexts. In mainstream takes on post-conflict situations, this gives rise to fears of ex-combatants returning to arms in rebel movements, banditry or criminal organizations and hence, threatening peace and political stability. In contrast, the Tillyan views of progress through conflict tend to stress the role of ex-combatant networks in situations of primitive accumulation and primary centralization of potentially state forming institutions. However, the uses to which such networks are put and whether they comprise a threat or a positive resource depend on context and do not necessarily conform to either of the above portrayals. In the Namibian case, many ex-combatants have retained their networks and political identity and have managed to turn these into a resource in collective bargaining and livelihood generation. This is certainly a case of ex-combatant political agency. However, that agency has operated in an institutional setting where stable statehood and administrative capacity were already in place and where political struggles concern the distribution of political power and its benefits rather than the establishment of regulative and administrative institutions in the first place. Furthermore, while the Namibian ex-combatants have skilfully toyed with the violent imagery associated with being an ex-combatant or a veteran, they have rarely resorted to violence in reality. In other words, they have tactically used the ex-combatant group identity, their special historical relationship with the current political elite and the imageries of heroism and security threat over the course of long-term, open negotiation with political authorities and the general public in which their demands have been of crucial importance in directing the Namibian

reintegration trajectory. In other words, their protests and criticisms have not led to their acting against or bypassing the state. Rather, they have invested their interests in the state, expecting it to recognize them and provide their livelihoods. By channelling their political agency towards this goal, they have, even if unintentionally, contributed towards the particular form that statehood has taken in Namibia.

Does this mean that Namibian reintegration has been unnecessarily politicized and hence distorted and made ineffective? I would argue that, contrary to the view that holds reintegration politics to be a shortcoming of the socio-political realities on the ground, the problem lies with the limited, technical scope of the DDR perspective. While the prevailing post-conflict policy discourse may note that DDR is an inherently political process (e.g. Nilsson 2005: 86), it tends to advocate that the ‘politicization’ of DDR should be avoided and neutrality and balanced representation of ‘stakeholders’ ensured. This tends to create an urge to keep monitoring the local and national actors involved and intervening if necessary. While this is understandable, it inherently favours issues of short-term order and stability over the less straightforward and immediate but immensely important long-term effects that reintegration processes may have on the build-up or fragmentation of authority, institutions and citizenship.

In sum, then, the policies, classifications and legislation produced during the course of dealing with ex-combatants in independent Namibia are not mere technical instruments reflecting the will of an abstract state – or the international community – and unidirectionally applied to a mass of ex-combatants. Rather, a mutually constitutive history between bureaucratic directives and law, on the one hand, and the social, on the other hand, has unfolded. Ex-combatant policy and legislation have emerged out of the specific history of the liberation struggle, and from the political longevity of its categories, as well as enduring bonds between different kinds of ‘ex-combatants’: those now in high official positions and their rank-and-file comrades. Specific demands by particular groups of ex-combatants have clearly been important in this process. At the same time, the constitutive relation also works in the other direction, as classifications codified in legislation and policy come to be

appropriated and naturalized in the self-understanding and claims of potential ex-combatants.¹⁴⁷

While the specific trajectory of Namibian reintegration is unique, in particular its heavy emphasis on public employment, it also invites comparisons. As a case of ex-combatant and veteran policies being formed through long-term negotiations between ex-combatants or veterans and political authorities, the Namibian experience does have predecessors, but these are both geographically and temporally more distant than the African cases most often discussed in connection with reintegration policies. For example, veteran policies in the United States were similarly formed – both after the Civil War and the First World War – in the interaction between organized veteran pressure, the federal government and the general political environment (Skocpol 1992; Ortiz 2010, 2012). However, I restate, such a negotiation has been possible only because the resource base and administrative capacity of the Namibian state has enabled reintegration and the development of veteran policies to take place as a predominantly domestic affair, unlike in many other African settings.

Other interesting comparisons can be made with the post-liberation states in Southern Africa. In all of them, one movement or party clearly emerged as dominant from wars that led to transitions to independence or, as in the case of Angola and Mozambique, from civil wars after independence. In particular, in South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe these movements inherited a relatively well-functioning and efficient administrative apparatus as well as a relatively well-performing economy against the background of authoritarian settler colonialism, which has enabled them to extend their hold on power over their territories, although in Zimbabwe later significant challenges forced ZANU-PF into power-sharing arrangements. In all these countries, the ex-combatants have adopted a position of strategic negotiation with the government, managing to establish themselves as an interest group and achieve official recognition, employment and benefits through oscillating between modestly conflictual and loyalist attitudes to the regime. Contrary to the imaginaries

¹⁴⁷ As Das (2011: 321) argues for an Indian case, ‘the most stunning example of law’s constitutive power is to shape social relations in a way that its own traces are erased in the very process of creating persons as legal subjects. Social actors, in this view, internalize the images, meanings, and even artifacts of law such that they appear as normal and natural...the notion of rights is now evoked among the urban poor and...many think that the State has promised them certain rights and that they have the standing (haq) to claim these rights.’

of ex-combatant policies that portray ex-combatantness as a passing stage, the ex-combatants have gradually turned into veterans and become a permanent feature of the institutional landscape through ever-new programmes, the establishment of veteran associations, veterans' acts and veteran ministries throughout Southern Africa (Lamb 2013: 29-30). This is not a condition that applies to all ex-combatants or veterans equally, however, but one that depends on the fault lines of the civil and independence wars that these countries experienced. Those who fought on the losing side have often been bypassed. This has been particularly pronounced in Zimbabwe and Namibia, where a close collusion between the ruling party and its veterans has occurred, both unofficially and in official policies and legislation (on Zimbabwe, see Kriger 2003: 185-6, 2006).

If there is a lesson to be drawn in terms of generalizing discussions on ex-combatants and reintegration, it is that the local institutional setting sets limits on the kinds of politics that are possible for the ex-combatants. This means that differences between ex-combatants from one context to another are likely to be more significant than differences between them and other social groups within any given context, calling stereotypical labellings into question. Instead of merely being the consequence of universal ex-combatant tendencies, contextual factors may play a more significant role in making various courses of action appear reasonable or appealing from the perspective of ex-combatants. More attention should be paid to the patterned constellation of social, political and economic institutions in which reintegration takes place, and the degree and kind of institutional centralization that is present, instead of assuming that reintegration always takes place in a similarly weak or fragile environment.

In this chapter, I have presented the broad outlines of the discursive registers and practices associated with reintegration and veteran policies in Namibia and compared these processes with some general categories of reintegration and experiences in other African contexts. In the following chapters I will, first, delve more deeply into the way in which links between ex-combatants and political authorities are established and maintained in reintegration, and second, examine Namibian liberationist memory politics and how it relates to the inclusions, exclusions and political implications of ex-combatant and veteran policies.

7 FROM DISCONTENTED HEROES TO FRONTLINE FUNCTIONARIES – REMOBILIZATION AND ORGANIZED VIOLENCE

At noon on Heroes' Day, 26 August 2003, my research assistant and I drove to Ohambala,¹⁴⁸ some distance from Oshikango, next to the Angolan border, the car struggling in the soft sand of the narrow and bumpy road. We found Pine a bit drunk, as expected. In a good mood, he told us that he had only returned home at half past six in the morning. Ndeshi, his girlfriend, was there too. Since my last visit, Pine had got himself a bigger bed and a mosquito net. He invited us for drinks in the shade of a tree behind the barrack where he pointed out a colleague who was watering tomatoes on the other side of the yard. In a quiet voice so that his colleague would not hear him, Pine said that the man used to be a killer during the war. Pine had learned from the Bible that killing was wrong but it was different in the war. In war, you either kill or get killed.

The tomato grower and two other Special Field Force constables soon joined us and started tossing down beer and *ombike*.¹⁴⁹ Through Pine's broken window, his small radio blasted a continuous string of liberation songs in praise of Sam Nujoma and armed liberation struggle. From time to time, Pine and his colleagues joined in the singing. The discussion turned to the employment policies of the army. According to the men, the Namibia Defence Force policy of only recruiting young people with specific educational qualifications was a mistake, as the youngsters had no experience and would run away if a 'real situation' arose. People like Pine's colleagues, it was explained, had been fighting in the bush for years so that everyone could enjoy the fruits of their labour in a free country. Yet they are suffering. Still, Pine was happy with his life. Some people are obsessed with getting rich, he said, but for him it is enough to be able to send his kids to school. Showing me

¹⁴⁸ This is a pseudonym.

¹⁴⁹ Locally distilled strong alcoholic drink.

photographs of his children, old friends and his police training, he expressed his gratitude to Swapo for taking him 'from the street': 'I am a full-blood Swapo till the day I die.'

As I argued in the previous chapter, Swapo ex-combatants and, to a lesser extent, other former exiles have been assured a preferential place in reintegration by the combination of their central position as heroes in the narrative of liberation, their history of close relations with the current political elite, the larger scale of former exile influence and pressure than that exerted by former SWATF and Koevoet, and the centrality of former exile officials in carrying out the mundane practices of reintegration. Through reintegration, they have been transformed from a social problem into frontline functionaries of the state. In this way, the creation of the security agencies of the new independent state and their manpower policies have been intimately connected with the ex-combatant issue.

The focus of this chapter on these core reintegrees is explored through a case study of the male ex-combatants of Swapo who served in the paramilitary Special Field Force (SFF) unit of the Namibian Police in Ohambala, north-central Namibia. By describing and discussing certain aspects and events in the lives of an ex-combatant called Pine and his colleagues, it examines how practices of reintegration and work have been translated into experiential realities. Among themes explored are personal narratives of loyalty and commitment, the significance and meanings of violence, and tangible and bodily practices of attachment. The chapter seeks to demonstrate that reintegration is not a straightforward issue of imposing effects upon a subject population but rather a matter of persuasively tapping into and trying to harness the needs, desires and aspirations of those it targets. This often seems to work in ways not likely foreseen by those who draft the policies, as a result of piecemeal decisions by multiple authorities at different levels of the administrative hierarchy.

The chapter also examines the significance of organized violence for contemporary Namibian statehood and illuminates the ties between structural and experienced violence. Since its creation, the SFF has been justified both by the need to pacify ex-combatants by offering them employment, and as a means to increase

police presence in remote areas. However, while these are relevant arguments, I wish to demonstrate that the SFF also makes manifest important aspects of the role of violence in Namibian state formation and embodies revealing ambiguities in how such violence is understood and dealt with. While the discussion of overarching structural violence in Chapter 4 largely presented violence as a force of control directed from the political centre towards the population and, as such, juxtaposed with policies and interactions that produce legitimacy and consent, here the role of violence is shown, on closer scrutiny, to be more complex: a force that involves different segments of the population in different ways, that can be engraved in subjective experience and that some subjects can even find empowering. Although the chapter proceeds from micro-level observations of events in the life of Pine and his colleagues, it seeks to highlight the structural factors that lie behind such seemingly isolated events and the way they motivate the actors, as well as the consequences that they have on statehood, sovereignty and political subjectivity. The chapter starts by introducing Pine's personal background, and then moves on to outline the history of policing in Namibia and the particular characteristics of the SFF. The second half of the chapter focuses on the SFF's relation to violence and its connections to the constitution of sovereignty and to the language of human rights.

'WE WERE ONLY STREET KIDS BUT THEN WE BECAME PEOPLE': FROM DEMOBILIZATION TO REMOBILIZATION

As I will demonstrate below, Pine seems very much like the ex-combatant imagined in the mainstream discourse of reintegration: a bearer of volatile agency that has been harnessed through employment and discipline, but is nonetheless a potential powder keg when left unattended. He grew up in the Ovambo section of Katutura. His father was a political activist who was imprisoned for several years, his mother a street vendor. He went into exile as a teenager in the mid-1980s and after studying in West Africa he returned to Angola and joined PLAN. Upon repatriation, he struggled and hustled for his living for nearly ten years until he was assimilated into the SFF in the late 1990s, receiving training and then being deployed in different parts of the northern border zone.

Pine was a childhood mate of my first research assistant and we had not been long in the north-central regions when my assistant took me to see him. After some searching, we found him in one of the numerous bars of Oshikango where he was enjoying his day off duty to the full, and already a bit drunk. Keen to engage with us, he was nevertheless somewhat reserved, scrutinising my papers carefully and asking questions about my background. I was not surprised, as by then I had already become accustomed to the sensitivity with which most people viewed my research on ex-combatants, especially in former Ovamboland. However, once the ice was broken, he agreed to participate and went on to be one of my closest research participants. This is how he initially told me about himself and his personal history:

My crossing the border during the exile was about colonialism. We black people...were suffering [because of] South Africa. [I went to] join the exile [to] fight for the independence of this land...[When] I arrived there, all the combatants...treated me with good manners. From there they sent me to school in West Africa...to study. After studying [I] came back [to] Angola...I stayed in Lubango and...everything was okay...because...I was with my father. Not my real father, but I call him today my father. And he's Sam¹⁵⁰...Then we came back...In this independent Namibia...I am feeling happy. Sometimes I remember some of my brothers and my colleagues, they [we]re left behind...but today...nobody comes and asks me, where's your ID, nobody comes and beats me, nobody can interrupt me. [It] is no more [like when] I [was] growing up...everything is different. [In] the old time, we suffered. Education was just for the white people who had money. Because we are black, my mum must work for a...white person maybe for ten years but she gets only two hundred. And me, I went to school without shoes, [it was] cold...But today [in] this independent Namibia...you can buy anything...go to school, eat at home...Today in this government of Sam, we are feeling free...My father was [a political prisoner]...And my mum was suffering a lot. And we struggled...The combatants, some of them [came to] my mum's home¹⁵¹...I feel this country [should] be ruled [by] Sam. I feel happy because Sam is alive until today, brings us bread in our homes. [We we]re only street kids but then we became people...[T]he time I [returned to] Namibia, my brothers and sisters were happy, to see my face...And after that, why I say I'm free now, in this independent Namibia, I'm [an] employee of the government now, without school...From '89, that time [we were a] lot, even our father couldn't give us work at the same time...The time we came from [exile]...[those] who were not employed...were getting food...meals, something just to [take] home to eat...[It was] not from the government, [it was] from our party...I [went] to our office, Swapo office, tell them I'm not employed, I suffer. They said 'don't care, time will come'...[when] we will become employees of this government...And [I] wrote myself¹⁵²...and their promise become true...Today, I'm an employee of the government...Look what I'm wearing, like a minister (laughter). Where did this money come from? From our independent...government.

Pine's story is largely in line with the most common life story scheme among Namibian former exiles, especially men (Metsola 2001). In it, one's life is tied

¹⁵⁰ Nujoma.

¹⁵¹ Pine means that his family assisted those involved in the liberation struggle.

¹⁵² By this Pine means registration.

closely to the liberation movement, stressing commitment to the liberation struggle, loyalty to Swapo, and communality with other exiles. Significantly, Pine's relationship with Swapo does not appear to have been broken by the transition to independence and repatriation of exiles but has remained highly significant. For him, involvement in the liberation struggle and continuing Swapo membership are both a source of belonging and a basis for claiming entitlements; in other words, important both emotionally and materially. The Swapo government is able to provide people with employment, which is seen as the realization of freedom and independence and contributes to his passionate loyalty to Swapo, personalized in the character of Sam Nujoma, whom he repeatedly referred to as his father. Freedom, education, jobs and bread on the table are expected to flow from 'the government of Sam'.

This extremely loyalist self-portrayal was not just a facade. Over the months I spent with Pine, his character as a 'full-blood Swapo till the day I die' emerged on various occasions. I also frequently witnessed him and his colleagues, almost all of them former exile men, spontaneously burst into singing liberation songs. For Pine, if you have joined Swapo and the struggle, it is for life. This perception of the continuation of firm links of loyalty and obligation between Swapo and its members is widely shared among former exiles and reflects a sense of obligation while, at the same time, providing the licence to make demands. It has not always been easy to maintain these bonds, however. The period after independence, when the exile collectivity broke down and everyone was supposed to take care of themselves, posed a serious challenge to this narrative, but employment through reintegration has facilitated its re-establishment.

Pine had already had a taste of the *tsotsi*¹⁵³ lifestyle before he left to go into exile. After repatriation, he continued in the same vein, living the hustling life in Katutura, engaging in petty crime and using alcohol, Mandrax and dagga (cannabis). When he did not go into town himself to try to grab something, he would try his luck with the other thugs in the shebeens,¹⁵⁴ bullying them to share their loot with him. He had been in jail many times. He told me that his father would bring him food yet

¹⁵³ *Tsotsi* means 'gangster' or 'thug'. Originating in South Africa, the term refers simultaneously to criminality and a certain youthful, predominantly male, urban style (Glaser 2000: 47-52). It is widely used in Namibia.

¹⁵⁴ Informal township bars.

never bail him out, since he wanted Pine to learn his lesson the hard way. Life was about to become really hard in 1992, however, when Pine went to town with two friends. They came across a man wearing sunglasses and one of Pine's companions snatched the glasses and passed them to the other companion, who in turn passed the first one a knife. The man was stabbed and bled to death. The perpetrator received a sentence of fifteen years and his helper five, while Pine was in custody for six months before walking away a free man. He continued with petty crime right up to the time he was incorporated into the police force. It is hardly surprising that many who had known him before found it difficult to believe in such a transformation.

Pine said that he would have preferred a job in the Defence Force. On the other hand, he definitely would not have accepted a job as a cleaner.¹⁵⁵ The police force was the second best option, and he was satisfied. In his view, his link with Swapo was unbreakable, not least because he saw his very survival depending on it: 'I could be dead or in jail...[It] is best to get...out of the streets, to become [an] employee of the government...I can sit in the office...without a certificate...The salary is too small, but I know our children...[will taste] the sweet[ness] of independence.' His police employment was obviously highly significant as a source of pride and identity, but also very much a bread-and-butter issue.

Furthermore, combined with this hope for a better future was the fear of a return to his troubled past. He told me that he preferred being stationed in the north rather than in Windhoek, because he was afraid of reverting to 'that old life'. He could speak admiringly of 'thug life', proudly refer to his *tsotsi* past, and creatively bend the rules that came with his professional role: 'I have two computers in my head: one for the government and one for my personal life,' he would say. Yet, at the same time, he saw clearly that the alternatives to his current employment were not desirable. Thus, his loyalty was also a matter of perceived dependency and reflected an urgent need to belong that arose from his personal history of uprootedness. He and many other ex-combatants were taken at a young age from their familial surroundings, which were already filled with violence and insecurity of various kinds,¹⁵⁶ and then lived through the war situation in exile. Despite his

¹⁵⁵ Many registered ex-combatants, especially women, have been employed as cleaners.

¹⁵⁶ For example, Pine's insistence on describing Sam Nujoma as his father had an underside in his sense of never really having had strong ties to his real father, as he was imprisoned before Pine went into exile and died soon after Pine's return. 'Everyone else has a father, but where is my pop?'

repeatedly stressed militancy, Pine often hinted at the terror of being confronted with killing. After returning to Namibia, they found themselves on their own, without the material and social safety net provided by Swapo in exile. This led them to exert pressure on ‘their government’, and in the end, their loyalty was rewarded. By employing them, the Swapo government¹⁵⁷ had officially acknowledged them, provided them with a source of identity, power and pride, and lifted them from the status of ‘street kids’ to ‘real people’ with a place within the nation.

Before continuing with Pine and his colleagues, let us pause for a contextualizing glimpse of the SFF and its place within the history of policing in Namibia. Modern policing was first introduced to the country by the German colonial administration. After South Africa took over, a South West African Police Force was established. It was disbanded in 1939 and policing duties were transferred to the South African Police until 1981 when the South West African Police Force (SWAPOL) was re-established. As in South Africa, policing in Namibia was segregated along racial lines and was concerned with providing security from the natives rather than for them. Seegers (1991) argues that three different modes of policing developed simultaneously in South Africa: liberal for whites, totalitarian for urban blacks and authoritarian for Asians, coloureds and rural blacks. Thus, in the townships of urban centres, policing mainly took a repressive form (Leys 1995). The native reserves or ‘homelands’ were ruled indirectly through chiefs who could mete out punishments with the assistance of ‘tribal’ police, including corporal punishment deemed to be traditional (see also Mamdani 2007: 9-10). Moreover, during the 1970s and 1980s, the country’s northern areas were under martial law, which meant that they were controlled with a heavy hand by the army and the paramilitary police unit Koevoet. To complement this, Swapo guerrillas did not deal leniently with those considered to be collaborators and traitors.

At independence, the new government regarded security sector reform as a priority concern. It was fully understood how deeply the police force of the previous

¹⁵⁷ Namibia is a case of dominant party rule within a democratic framework. Swapo regularly collects over 70% of the vote in elections declared free and fair by external observers, and is therefore the sole party in government.

regime had been implicated in repression and there was to be a significant change in the concept of policing. At the same time, the policy of reconciliation dictated that all members of SWAPOL who wanted to retain their positions could do so, resulting in the new police force being formed on the basis of apartheid-era agency and inheriting its leadership and structures (Nathan 1992: 155; Hills 2000: 125). Meanwhile, a significant number of new police members were recruited from the ranks of demobilized ex-combatants (Nathan 1992: 156; Preston 1997: 459, 463) which meant that the new force consisted of old members who had served under the previous, oppressive regime and new members who had a military background and, apart from a few, no experience of civilian policing. British assistance was enrolled to reform the police into a 'police service' that would provide policing by consent and respect human rights (Nathan 1992: 155; Leys 1995: 133; Namibian Police, Operation Manual).¹⁵⁸ There has been a genuine attempt to widen the scope of liberal policing from the white minority to all persons, and notable advances have been made in police practice and relations with the public since independence. Still, everyday practice has not demonstrated a complete break with the past. Excessive violence and other malpractices by the police have remained a steady source of complaint.

Since independence, two significant changes have taken place in the composition of the police force. First, the proportion of former SWAPOL officers has been gradually declining, mainly due to retirement and resignations. Second, a new division, the Special Field Force, was created with Nampol in 1996, mainly in response to the need to employ former combatants who were demanding government jobs. The vast majority of these were former Swapo combatants. Within a few years, the strength of the SFF grew to approximately 7,000 members, constituting roughly three-fourths of Nampol's personnel.¹⁵⁹ The main duty of the

¹⁵⁸ In the course of its historical development in the late-nineteenth century, the British model of 'policing by consent' was gradually established on the following principles: bureaucratic organisation and professionalism, the rule of law, use of minimal force, political non-partisanship, accountability, a service role, emphasis on crime prevention rather than detection, and effectiveness (Reiner 2000: 48-58). These principles are still influential in modern policing models and their echoes are easily discernible in the official documents and statements issued by the Namibian Police, as well as in my interviews with high-ranking Namibian police officers.

¹⁵⁹ '[W]e have plus minus 7,000 members of the Special Field Force and 2,000 regular police... This has been as a result of the ex-combatants we have taken in over the years since 1996.' Minister of Home Affairs Jerry Ekandjo, 9 November 2001, Debates of the National Assembly 53/2001. At the time, policing administratively fell under Home Affairs. It was moved to the newly created Ministry of Safety and Security in 2005.

SFF has been to guard Namibia's borders, especially in the north of the country where it constitutes the primary police presence, though it also guards government installations and can be deployed in other duties as required.¹⁶⁰ This was acknowledged by Home Affairs minister Jerry Ekandjo in his 1998 budget speech: 'The patrolling of the borders by the Special Field Force members has brought the police closer to the communities who are not close to normal police stations.' In the following year, he explained the functions of the SFF in the following way:

The main function of the Special Field Force is to patrol the borders. The borders are long...These people sleep in the field, no mosquito nets, no tents, nothing whatsoever. So the money budgeted for this must cater for medicine, malaria tablets, for snake bites, for field kitchens, tents, etc...At every substation we allocate one properly trained police officer and maybe 10 members of the Special Field Force. The officer who is properly trained is the one in command.... These people [the SFF] patrol by foot in the villages where there are many *cuca* shops.¹⁶¹ The Special Field Force patrols the squatter areas in Katutura. We want the properly trained police to investigate crime.¹⁶²

Notably, Ekandjo distinguishes the SFF from 'properly trained police', a recurrent distinction in descriptions of it. Since its inception, the SFF has been seen to differ from other branches of Nampol in many ways. Its special character was reiterated by my Nampol interviewees in 2009, who mentioned such issues as poor educational background, differences in training, military background and age as creating differences between the SFF and regular police.¹⁶³

Despite the widespread public perception of the SFF as a fearsome paramilitary force, most of the daily activities of its members made clear its role as an employment creation scheme. Apart from patrolling the border area, which is officially their main duty, the force members at Ohambala always seemed to have time to play cards or pool and have a drink or two in the *cuca* shops with the locals –

¹⁶⁰ The Nampol Annual Report 2006/7 – unfortunately the most recent that I have accessed – only gives a numbers breakdown for regular police and SFF/border guards (both titles are variably used) for some regions: Kavango: 441 SFF, 255 other police (p. 23); Omusati: 570 border guards, 271 other police (p. 29); Oshana: 342 border guards, 439 other police (p. 30); Oshikoto: 203 SFF, 277 other police (p. 30). For Ohangwena, there is no breakdown but it is notable that this populous region with its long border with Angola and major cross-border trade and transport node in Oshikango only had a 219-strong police contingent (p. 27). From my own experience I know that many, probably most, of those were SFF.

¹⁶¹ Informal bars.

¹⁶² Debates of the National Assembly 34/1999.

¹⁶³ Author's interviews with the following Nampol personnel: commissioner A, 4 February 2009; chief inspector A, 2 February 2009; chief inspector B, 29 January 2009; and deputy commissioner A, 4 February 2009.

or sometimes with their Angolan colleagues from across the border. In contrast with pre-independence police forces, their relations with locals tend to be more amicable, at least in Ovamboland. The Ohambala SFF base consisted of two dilapidated buildings and a few military-type tents; there was no police flag, sign or indeed anything in its appearance to suggest that it was a police station. Most of the rooms had no windows, some had no doors and up to four or five men slept in the same room; there was no kitchen so food was cooked outside in big pots. Sergeant Neto, who was the base commander, and Pine, who acted as the secretary of the group, had the luxury of having their own rooms, but these were as decrepit as the others. My assistant laughed and shook his head at these conditions, saying, ‘they are used [to it]...As long as you are a soldier, you cannot expect luxury...especially that side of the country.’¹⁶⁴ He went on to talk about Pine:

You can see that he’s a military guy now; everything he sa[ys]...is in that framework of the army...When we were kids...we were just talking about music and soccer stars but now...even the way he is looking at you, he is...glaring at you...He is drinking too much. And people who came back from exile are associated with too much drink.

In Namibian public discourse, ex-combatants were commonly associated with heavy drinking, a perception often linked with other stereotypes: they were seen to be troublesome men with loose sexual morals who just wanted to spend time together, reminiscing about their exile past (*kombada*). It must be said that Pine and his colleagues did not do much to dispel these stereotypes. They drank often and in large amounts; they liked to talk about ‘the struggle’ and sing liberation songs,¹⁶⁵ and they could be reckless and sexually promiscuous. Their paramilitary, nearly exclusively male¹⁶⁶ living and working environment did not much restrain these

¹⁶⁴ That is, in the rural areas of former ethnically-based homelands.

¹⁶⁵ On one occasion I interviewed a former exile police reservist in the company of Pine and one of his colleagues. When the discussion turned to the issue of political conscientization in exile, Pine felt prompted to sing a couple of the liberation songs that were sung in exile, and the others joined in. After finishing, Pine commented that they still like to sing those songs but national reconciliation prevents them from doing so. Actually, the songs were sung rather frequently, but apparently this ran counter to recommendations in the unified police force, as they were considered openly political and therefore divisive.

¹⁶⁶ Only one woman worked at the Ohambala SFF station, coming in from her home nearby. Occasionally, she made remarks or gave me amused looks about the drunken behaviour of Pine or her other colleagues.

tendencies.¹⁶⁷ However, whether the stereotypes about ex-combatants were true or not is less important than the fact that they existed and were widely used in local discourse. They were important in drawing a line between the ‘returnees’ (*ovaaluki*) and the ‘remainees’ or ‘stayers’, a distinction that was clearly alive and well fifteen years into independence. It was not a hostile distinction and there could be a lot of amicable interaction between the two groups, yet it persistently reproduced difference between them through the same kind of stereotypes that had prevailed immediately after independence.¹⁶⁸

As I argued in the previous chapter, reintegration served to reaffirm the close links between Swapo and its formerly exiled rank and file. While reintegration was an ostensibly neutral, bureaucratic exercise, based on rule-governed implementation of premeditated categorizations of beneficiaries, former exiles tended to portray it as Swapo calling its cadres to duty in the same way it did in exile. This perception was strengthened by the fact that ex-combatant registrations were carried out by former exile officials and military commanders now in prominent government and party positions. At the same time, the granting of ex-combatant status elevates earlier participation in the liberation struggle into a major determinant of official recognition and associated benefits. For those ex-combatants who have received government employment, particularly in the uniformed services such as the SFF, the reinforcement of these links has continued through work practices: the paramilitary conditions and male camaraderie of the force members continues to bind their lives to the power of the Swapo government, or ‘our government’, as Pine put it. For instance, living together in the base placed individual agency firmly within the disciplinary frames of official and unofficial codes of conduct and peer control, even when off duty. It encouraged perceptions of their current life as having continuity with that under Swapo’s care in exile, both through replicating its regimented milieu and through facilitating constant reminiscing of ‘the struggle’ in story and song. Furthermore, despite its regulated nature, the way of life of the SFF police was also a source of licences related to frontier masculinity: licence to drink, have casual sex, roam the frontier territory and exercise a degree of power over others. Against the background of Ovamboland’s occupation and contestation during the war, physical

¹⁶⁷ However, it is hard to say to what extent their behaviour actually differed from the general population, and they were clearly not all the same in this respect.

¹⁶⁸ For more on this issue, see pp. 198-200.

control of the territory via armed, uniformed patrol was obviously rewarding. In this sense, the power involved in reintegration through police employment appears as disciplinary and restraining, while also representing governance through freedom in the Foucauldian sense of promoting practices that the members of the force value and assess as liberties. Ultimately, their linkage to party and state entails the licence to use violence in the name of the state and it is this aspect of their existence that I will now examine.

TRAVELLING THE SFF LANDSCAPE: VIOLENCE AND EMBODIED POWER

On one of the last days of my stay in northern Namibia, Pine and Sergeant Neto, the Ohambala SFF base commander, took my assistant and me to another village at the border, somewhere Neto had been stationed in the past. We met at the local garage that often served as an informal socialising spot before proceeding to a bar in Oshikango for some drinks: beer for Pine, brown rum for Sarge and soft drinks for my assistant and me. We then drove for about an hour and stopped near our destination at one of the local *cuca* shops, a spacious room with a couple of tables and a few chairs, a pool table and the counter. There was a shop in the adjacent room. Neto started ordering rounds of beer and rum. We occupied a round table, and were soon deep in discussion. Pine bragged about knowing a good number of top politicians, and said that they loved him because they used to know his father and his contributions to the struggle. I asked him why he had gone into exile if he was used to street life. He replied that street life was not all there was for him; he also knew politics through his father's activities. I then asked his opinion about Tauno, an older man whom Pine had introduced to us and whom we had interviewed at a *cuca* shop right on the border. During the interview, Tauno had told us that he had been involved in Swapo's internal conflict of 1976 and had thereafter left the organization although he had formally remained a member. Pine told us that after leaving Swapo, Tauno had also been in UNITA and the MPLA. He and my assistant said that Tauno is a Namibian in Namibia and an Angolan in Angola. 'You don't seem to appreciate him too much,' I said. Pine replied: 'If you remember the day you joined the struggle and why you joined, you will not run away. If I was not a

peacekeeper, I would tell him straight to fuck off.’ He repeated, once again, his view of ‘Sam’ as his father. On the other hand, Pine gave credit to Tauno for trying to be active and make ends meet.

The conversation then turned to the familiar theme of the lifestyle of the bad guys of Pine’s and my assistant’s youth in Katutura, some of whom had transported all sorts of weapons, including assault rifles, in the boots of their cars. Jumping from one name to another, my companions recalled their exploits and talked about what had become of them: who had made it in ‘business’ (that is, various shady dealings), and now lived luxuriously in South Africa; who was into cocaine; and who had drowned trying to swim across the river to Namibia with a load of diamonds. Among the people recalled were Pine’s brothers,¹⁶⁹ Ninja and Sticks. Ninja used to be violent and always carried an axe, a knobkerrie¹⁷⁰ and a gun in his car. According to my assistant: ‘He was not an easy man. When he said, “I will come for you,” don’t think it’s a joke. He’s not joking, he means it.’ On the other hand, he had become rich through diamonds and could spend money like water, and was therefore respected in the community though he had since relocated to South Africa. Pine talked about Sticks more often and seemed to feel closer to him than to Ninja. Sticks had also done well in ‘business’; he owned properties in Windhoek and was ‘driving a BMW 540 convertible’.¹⁷¹

There was a reason for picking this particular joint out of all the *cuca* shops around. Neto’s girlfriend worked here, and he arranged for her to prepare some Ovambo chicken and *oshifima*¹⁷² for us. We ate in the storeroom, sitting on overturned beer crates, taking turns at tearing pieces off the chicken and dipping our lumps of *oshifima* in the stew. Our tour then took us to the local SFF base and the *cuca* shops nearby. In every bar and on every corner Neto found familiar faces who greeted him, delighted to see him around again. The SFF base had been, so I was told, a South African army base before independence. Trenches, sand bags and

¹⁶⁹ It should be noted that in Ovambo usage, the term ‘brother’ is not restricted to males born to the same mother and father, but may include more distant relatives and people who have grown up together.

¹⁷⁰ Knob-headed wooden stick, a traditional weapon in Southern Africa.

¹⁷¹ In the Namibian fetishism of the car, widespread especially among young men, the BMW – ‘Be My Wife’, as it was sometimes said to stand for – occupies the highest position as the ultimate symbol of success and the fancy life.

¹⁷² *Oshifima* is a stiff porridge made of *mahangu* (pearl millet) or maize meal. It is a staple food in northern Namibia.

people strutting around in uniforms gave it away as a military locale; otherwise it was just as quiet and sleepy as the surroundings. On our way back, we stopped in Oshikango and headed to one of the bars along the main road. Knowing that my assistant and I had the habit of jogging in the mornings, Pine explained that he was not a runner, but could walk long distances tirelessly in his uniform, carrying his gun and other equipment. He also spoke approvingly of Neto's physical ability.

We met Pine's colleague, Emil, at the bar and I remembered another evening when we had found Pine and Emil at the same place. On that occasion, they were in civilian clothes and, after a couple of drinks, they had asked us for a lift back to Ohambala. We had turned off the main road into the tiny, unpaved, dark alleys of the settlement area where Emil's girlfriend had a room in one of the houses, and Emil and Pine had disappeared inside to reappear a few minutes later in their uniforms. Apparently they had been on duty when they came to Oshikango, and had dropped the uniforms off when they started drinking. When we made a final stop at one of the roadside bars, it was my assistant who went in to buy a few beers for the road as Pine and Emil could not do so in uniform because people might complain. In Ohambala, Pine and Emil told us to stop some distance from the station, so that they could walk the rest of the way. They did not want the sergeant to see them returning by car, as he might get suspicious. After a while, they returned in their civilian clothes, giggling like naughty little boys and, with the smell of AWOL-ing hanging in the air, we continued to the bars nearby.

Now Emil was no longer stationed at Ohambala. He had had a drunken argument with a couple of villagers in a *cuca* shop one night and after a heated exchange of words and punches, he had threatened them and then gone back to the station to get his uniform and gun. However, before the situation became disastrous, his colleagues had stopped him and called for reinforcements from Oshikango. Emil had been taken into custody in Eenhana, the regional capital, and then transferred to a remote base deep in the eastern bush of the region.¹⁷³ Now, in a jolly mood, he was back for some free time with his mates and his girlfriend.

The following morning, my assistant and I returned to Ohambala. We did not find Pine and Neto at the station and their colleagues told us that they had left for the

¹⁷³ In 2004, *The Namibian* carried a story of a very similar case with an unhappy ending in which an SFF police officer in Rundu had quarrelled with two brothers over a glass of traditional beer at a *cuca* shop, then left for his camp, changed into uniform, and returned to shoot one of the brothers twice with an assault rifle. 'Officer jailed for murder over beer', *The Namibian* 15 July 2004.

bush to arrest some suspects. We contacted Neto on his cellphone and, after following his directions over roughly ten kilometres of tiny dirt roads, we found them in a village. Dressed in his uniform and boots and carrying his assault rifle in the burning sun, Pine was sweating profusely and still reeked of alcohol, yet was clearly happy. Proudly, he reminded us of what he had said the night before: 'I told you I can walk 20 kilometres without any problems.' Neto did not seem to be much bothered by the previous night. With them were two of their colleagues, without uniforms, and the two suspects: barefoot and anxious teenage boys. The men decided that we should have some refreshments in the *cuca* shop nearby. Perhaps with the Emil incident in mind, Pine remarked that if he had an argument with someone, he would not use his police gun because he understood his position as a member of the police force. Instead, he would go to the nearest shop and buy a knife, and then it would be just one man against another. I took some photographs since Pine had told me a few times that he wanted my older son to have a picture of him in his uniform with his assault rifle.

Back at the base, one of the policemen ordered the suspects to sit down on the floor, explaining to them:

Now I'm going to teach you a lesson. Can you tell me whether you have written proof that you got the right to assault people? Come here, lie down here now, I want to teach you a lesson that you don't have the right but the police has the right to arrest you. I have to punish you.

He then started smacking the suspects' feet with his baton, occasionally peeping out of the window to make sure that Neto could not see or hear what was happening. The boys were then dragged out, beaten with fists and kicked around their bodies. Faces aglow with excitement, the men took turns in administering their instant justice, meanwhile scolding the lads for making them run around the villages on a hot day. In tears, eyes downcast, avoiding any quick movements and keeping quiet, the boys tried not to provoke the police any further. After a few minutes, the men decided that one of the boys, who was said to have beaten a girl, should sweep the yard and then he could go, while the other, who was said to have torched a house, would be taken to the police station in Oshikango. For the rest of the day, my

assistant kept on laughingly criticizing the way Pine and his colleagues had treated the suspects.¹⁷⁴

The incident described above is by no means unique. The reputation of the Namibian police has been continuously marred by what both local and international observers are quick to label transgressions, with regular incidents of brutality towards suspects and others being reported to the Police, the Ombudsman and human rights organizations (for figures, see Nampol n.d.: 7; Ombudsman Namibia n.d.: 21; NSHR 2008: 139-40).¹⁷⁵ This situation was reflected in the public opinion survey Nampol conducted in the northern regions in 2004. It found that ‘there is an overwhelming perception amongst the respondents that the police need to do something in order to improve or enhance its performance or the conducts [sic] of its members’ (Nampol 2004: 16). It went on to recommend: ‘There is a strong need to advocate professionalism through the force in order to ensure that, issues of friendliness, politeness, fairness, integrity, honesty, and probity are incorporated into the day-to-day operations of the Namibian Police’ (ibid.: 24).

The most widely publicized incidents of violence occurred in 1999 during and after the short-lived secession attempt in Caprivi, and in the following few years along the Namibia-Angola border in connection with the Angolan civil war. Both situations created prolonged states of exception, although a formal state of emergency was only declared in the Caprivi case; also in both cases, the media and human rights organizations regularly reported harsh measures inflicted by the

¹⁷⁴ Pine had used his license to commit violent acts far more dramatically than in this case of suspect beating. It was quite common to try to drive stolen cars across the border into Angola (Grobler 2003: 21-24), and I was told that a couple of years earlier, Pine had shot at such a car, killing one of the passengers. He had been acquitted after an internal investigation.

¹⁷⁵ There is an interesting regional variation in complaints submitted to the Ombudsman in 2007 (Ombudsman Namibia n.d.). They tend to concentrate on the former Police Zone in the southern and central parts of the country at the expense of the former homelands. The populous northern regions lie lowest on the list, with the exception of Oshana, which hosts the urban concentrations of Oshakati and Ongwediva, though it is likely that such differences do not directly reflect differences in the performance of the authorities in the different regions. A number of other reasons might better explain them, including the relative difficulty or ease of communicating with the Ombudsman’s office, public awareness of the right to complain, and different perceptions of the accountability or accessibility of authorities in the former homelands and the rest of country. It follows that quite possibly a considerable number of instances that could be classified as malpractice or violations have been left unaccounted for.

Special Field Force and the Namibian Defence Force on civilians allegedly suspected of belonging to, or supporting, the secessionists or UNITA (e.g. Amnesty International 2002: 18-19; Lamb 2002: 35-37). As these emergencies took place during the early years of the SFF, they may have contributed to the entrenchment of its paramilitary character, serving as a transmission belt for militarist practices of violence from war to peace.

Pine had been in the Caprivi Strip in 1999 and did not see any problem in the way the Caprivi situation had been dealt with. On the contrary, he relished his participation in quashing the secession attempt, taking pride in unquestioningly fulfilling his duty, even if it was dangerous or required heavy-handed measures: 'We were the ones called to handle the situation. We were fighting for this country before and we are ready to defend it.' He often made it clear that he was still quite prepared to use violent measures in defence of the state and Swapo rule in the borderland. For example, he once agitatedly told me of rumoured joint military action against the government by Angolan UNITA forces and the Namibian opposition party, the Congress of Democrats, asserting that he was ready to fight them.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, Peter,¹⁷⁷ who had served with the SFF in Kavango in the early 2000s, recounted a shooting incident near Rundu in which he and three of his colleagues had come across a group of border crossers who, according to Peter, were UNITA members: 'They used to come over by night to get restocked and terrorize the people.' One of the men tried to run away, and Peter's colleague shot him. When the matter went to court Peter was also accused, 'although I did not even shoot'. My assistant criticized their use of violence, but Peter did not agree, arguing that they had known that the men were UNITA thugs and anyway, it was an offence to cross the border without a permit. Therefore, in his view there was nothing wrong with what they had done.

Apart from these borderland operations, there have been other high-profile incidents elsewhere, for example attacks on men wearing earrings in Katutura on the grounds of their being presumed homosexual. The SFF also has a reputation for the casual beating of suspected offenders (Amnesty International 2002: 18-19, 22-23; Lamb 2002), in the style of the incident I witnessed. Official responses have usually

¹⁷⁶ 'You know who my father is? Sam. How could I not follow my father? I will always be with him.' His colleagues, however, appraised the situation more calmly. One of them joked that if UNITA returns, they will run away and Pine will be left alone to shit his pants. 'You are a bloody alcoholic, so what can you do?' This exchange was followed by a few liberation songs.

¹⁷⁷ He will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

expressed concern over the use of ‘excessive’ violence and promised that the incidents will be investigated. Prompted by reports of unwarranted arrest and severe torture of civilians at the hands of SFF members in Kavango, the police Inspector General in 2007 issued the following directive to police regional commanders and commanding officers:

I am witnessing the escalating trend of human rights violations by members of the Force, which, indeed, is a great concern.... Violation of human rights by members continue[s] to rear its ugly head in the Force, a situation which cannot be left unabated. These types of acts are not expected from professional Police Officers, who are entrusted to maintain law and order, ensure highest standards of the respect of the rule of law, basic human rights and democratic values, amongst others. It is totally against the general principles of the Human Rights Code of Conduct, and, without doubt, [it] is tarnishing the good image and reputation of the Force.¹⁷⁸

Human rights training has been another recurrent response in the overall objective of reforming the Namibian Police after independence. Initially, it was supplied by the British (Hills 2000: 126-7; Nathan 1992: 155) but now such training is regularly organized for members of the police with the assistance of donors¹⁷⁹ and local NGOs such as the Legal Assistance Centre. The original impetus for human rights reform was provided by the legacy of repression before independence but its urgency has been periodically emphasized ever since. Reports of the intimidation and brutal treatment of civilians by border guards, the Task Force and the Presidential Guard, particularly in the northern areas of the country during the early years of independence, seemed to indicate that the violent legacy had reproduced itself through the transition to independence (Nathan 1992: 156-7, 161; Leys 1995; Hills 2000: 124-133). In the late 1990s, the formation of the Special Field Force and the problems associated with it again brought human rights concerns to the fore (e.g. Embassy of Finland n.d.: 9, 13) and they have kept reappearing ever since. For example, the Ombudsman wrote in 2009:

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in ‘Police Inspector General praised’, a press release by the National Society for Human Rights [<http://www.nshr.org.na/index.php?module=News&func=display&sid=682>, accessed 9 March 2015] and in ‘Police chief lays down law on brutality claims’, *The Namibian* 30 March 2007.

¹⁷⁹ According to a project document by the Finnish Embassy, ‘in Namibia, the donor support in the area of human rights and good governance is coordinated through the donor group “Partners of democracy.” Several donors, in particular the United States (U.S.), France, Finland, and the Netherlands, provide support to NAMPOL in the area of community policing, human rights and special training activities. The UN Human Rights Commissioner’s office has also organized human rights training for law enforcement officers.’ (Embassy of Finland in Namibia n.d.: 11.)

It has become apparent that police officers need human rights training in order to prevent them from the potential to abuse their power, which usually results in a human rights violation. The Office of the Ombudsman, with the assistance of donors, is in the process of compiling and printing a comprehensive manual on human rights training for the Police (Walters 2009: 126).

The Inspector General's circular, quoted above, is another example of this recurring concern with human rights; time and again, the phenomenon of excessive violence and other police malpractice is rediscovered as a problem requiring an urgent response. Interventions tend to follow a common formula that emphasizes transmitting constitutional and universal human rights principles to members of the police by producing and circulating manuals, and arranging courses and workshops. Therefore, as the issue is recognized and steps are being taken to deal with it, the persistence of violent practices must stem from something besides ignorance or inattention. Two apparently contradictory forces – a relatively high level of violent instances and complaints against the police, and a pervasive apparatus of human rights rhetoric and instruments – seem to coexist continuously.

The sense of universal moral superiority associated with the globally circulating discourse of human rights easily leads into unidirectional and non-participatory reform approaches. The problem with such interventions is that they tend to isolate the police (or other agencies to be reformed) from broad societal forces and constraints. Historical legacies and associated political complexities might be accepted in practice, but their implications are rarely analysed in detail. They are rather treated as the starting point in a teleological narrative of improvement that will lead to better institutions and good governance through reforms. Yet it is probably too simplistic to assume that unwanted practices will be rooted out simply by more training in what is acceptable and what is not, or by assuming that such insights will effectively trickle down through the force hierarchy from higher levels. Instead, directives couched in an abstract, seemingly universal, human rights language might end up as disingenuous discursive performances of responsibility that might appeal to donors and 'civil society' representatives, but fail to reach their supposed audience among practitioners of state violence (see Jensen 2009: 62-4). Paradoxically, the human rights normativity that increasingly turns violence into absolute evil instead of analytically engaging with the conditions and forces of its production, might not end violence but, rather, lead to the evolution of less shocking forms of abuse and coercion and subtler explanatory vocabularies, or

drive it into the territorial and social margins of the state – in frontier areas and among the poor or outcast – where it does not appear quite as alarming as in the centre, and yet is still capable of sending out signals of power.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, to make sense of the reasons for patterns of organized violence such as those outlined above, it would seem useful to take seriously a number of contributory factors: the country-specific histories of social and political institutions that provide the context of violent acts; the specific biographies of force members; the ways in which instructions get translated (Merry 2009; Jensen and Jefferson 2009) from central offices to practical implementation on the ground; and the degree to which they resonate with the experiential realities of local police officers and the public. These are the issues to which I now turn.

Crime and the will to control

A common explanation among the Namibian police authorities whom I interviewed in 2009 was that abuses by police officers are exceptional, isolated cases stemming from individual failures of conduct.¹⁸¹ As put by Nampol commissioner A:

Such kind of incidences are not institutionalised, no, these are isolated individual incidents...[They are] not commanded and can be dealt with. It's just an individual. Some police officers also feel that 'if I'm in uniform I'm above the law', definitely no. Some of them did not have a chance also to get really exposed on how to police in a democracy.¹⁸²

Yet available figures, news reports and personal accounts indicate that breaches of rules happen regularly.¹⁸³ Clearly, the relatively high level of reported police violence cannot be explained away as aberrations or isolated cases. While they are

¹⁸⁰ See Rejali (2007: 2-3) who writes of torture in modern democracies. He argues that 'wherever citizens gather freely to review public power or name violent injustice, we are also more likely to see covert violence. In democracies, the police, the military, and the secret services are constrained by constitutions and monitored by judges and internal review boards, by a free press, and by human rights organizations' and this creates a need to conceal violence. 'The modern democratic torturer knows how to beat a suspect senseless without leaving a mark.'

¹⁸¹ Another explanation employs the idea of transition to argue that violence will gradually pass with time.

¹⁸² Interview 4 February 2009. See also Nampol Public Relations spokesperson Hofni Hamufungu as quoted in 'NBC feedback: Namibian Police Special Field Force (SFF),' *New Era* 6 November 2009. Hornberger (2009: 80) notes a tendency towards similar argumentation in South Africa.

¹⁸³ While regular, they certainly do not appear as prevalent or extreme as in some other postcolonial democracies, such as Kenya, Zimbabwe or Brazil.

not necessarily enactments of premeditated policy, they are nevertheless a structural phenomenon that ought to be explained as such. In this respect, Inspector General Ndeitunga's circular, quoted above, is exceptional in the degree to which it approached admission of an institutionalized element to such cases. However, instead of provoking a deeper examination of the structural sources of violent practices in police/public encounters, the proposed remedy has repeatedly been more and better education and awareness-raising on human rights issues.

Ground level officials talk differently. They seldom portray violence as a deviation but rather as a normal part of police work, admitting that violence takes place and explaining it by referring to an underlying rationality. Mandume, a Swapo ex-combatant who had become a SFF policeman,¹⁸⁴ answered my questions on the issue in the following way:

LM: When you go patrolling with your colleagues, how are your relations with the people, with the public; what do they think about you?

Mandume: The relationship with the public is fine, but the main aim for us to be part, to join the police was that people have lost respect of the police, so we are the ones to uproot the weed, which will gain more respect for the police.

LM: So, what are the ways or methods of doing this?

Mandume: There are many ways to do that, the methods...of taking care of the person, beat him up even, because if you beat the person, corporal punishment, in most cases that person will not repeat it again...There were many things here, like foreigners have been attacked, and things have been taken away from them, but now go around, you will see that it has dropped.

Here a different normative code from that of human rights talk emerges, one centred on respect and order. A similar concern with the public's attitudes towards the police arises, if less straightforwardly, in many of my interviews with high-ranking officials. One argued that the public lost respect for the police after the shift from police force to police service. For others, the lack of respect and hostile attitudes are legacies from the time before independence when the police were rightly understood to be an oppressive force.

There is a pervasive subscript to the implications of human rights in police discourse which argues that the human rights emphasis has led to increased arrogance in the Namibian public: the people have lost respect for the police and

¹⁸⁴ He will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

therefore cause trouble. Awareness of their rights by members of the public breaks down the hierarchical relationship expected by the police and thus leads to increased uncertainty and conflictuality in interaction. To compensate, it is argued, the police might sometimes resort to violence to reaffirm their authority, something necessary to maintaining law and order. Here, a move is made from the dictates that regulate members into the world of real encounters between the police and the public, which are recognized as mutually constructed interaction and practical negotiation rather than mere implementation of prior principles.

This explanatory moral notion of respect is tied to ideas of order and authority and their fundamental importance, which leads us to refer to the decisionist approach to sovereignty originally outlined by Schmitt (2005). As he famously put it, 'sovereign is he who decides on the exception' (ibid.: 5). However, as Hussain (2003: 20) points out, Schmitt does not only stress the ability to decide on the exception but also, by inversion, the ability to decide when normal conditions prevail and therefore, to decide whether legal norms apply or not. In this way, sovereignty conditions and encapsulates legality (Schmitt 2005: 13).

Exceptional situations such as wars or states of emergency have usually been seen as the most typical situations where this decisionist character of sovereignty becomes visible because they appear as a threat not to a particular law but to the very existence of the political order. As put by Hussain (2003: 107): 'Crime is a transgression against the law that may be checked by it. A more general unrest threatens not so much to transgress the law as to set up an alternative logic and authority to it.' The typical response to such a situation is to declare a state of emergency or martial law, a decision that involves significantly curbing ordinary legal mechanisms in favour of wide executive discretion. 'Martial law seeks to effect not just the restoration of order but the restoration of the general authority of the state...of what legal theorists like to call the "habit of obedience"' (ibid.: 124, 130.) The Caprivi secession attempt and the unrest along the Namibia-Angola border shortly thereafter fit this description quite clearly. These incidents and the widely reported responses by the NDF and SFF brought the violent basis of sovereignty temporarily into the open on a large scale and revealed its tense relation to the rule of law in the sense of correct procedures and fundamental rights.

However, apart from such explicit emergencies, there are elements of 'emergency' built into everyday forms and logics of policing, and these might

eventually be more illuminating for concerns related to Namibian state formation and the role of policing within it. What must be added to Hussain's distinction, noted above, between crime and 'a more general unrest' is that in Namibia (as in South Africa, see e.g. Jensen 2005; Comaroff and Comaroff 2004) the question of crime has grown to such proportions that it challenges the ability of the law to contain it.¹⁸⁵ Crime is seen as something that threatens the survival and fabric of society and thus appears as a matter of ontological insecurity, bordering on a condition of institutionalized emergency, something which has led to calls for tougher measures. The Commission of Inquiry into Legislation for the More Effective Combating of Crime in Namibia, chaired by Judge Bryan O'Linn in 1996-1997, arranged public hearings around the country and uncovered a widespread view that the rights of the victims and 'law-abiding members of society' should be emphasized instead of those of the accused and convicted (Nandjaa 1997: 8-9). At their most extreme, the demands for tougher sentences comprise recurrent calls for a reintroduction of the death penalty that was abolished at independence, as well as widespread support for corporal punishment. For example, in the hearings of the O'Linn Commission it was proposed that 'corporal punishment be reintroduced for crimes of violence and in cases of juveniles', as 'corporal punishment was a traditional form of punishment imposed by many traditional and indigenous authorities in Namibia' (Nandjaa 1997: 8-9).¹⁸⁶

Strong executive control has been a feature of Namibian modern statehood throughout its history. The perception of pervasive crime appears as a threat to order, hence the urge to act against it without restraint. This is not really a matter of whether the death penalty or less extreme forms of corporal punishment are proportional responses to certain crimes or successful deterrents of future crime, both hotly debated issues. What is more at issue is how capital punishment and, less dramatically, corporal punishment, make the link between law and violence clearly visible and, hence, reassert the sovereignty of the state – or other political authority

¹⁸⁵ I am referring to the discourse on crime rather than actual crime levels. While certain crimes, including violent ones, are prevalent in Namibia, available statistics show relatively stable levels rather than an increase (see Nampol n.d.: 14; Boer 2004: 124; Nandjaa 1997: 2-6). This point was also made by the Permanent Secretary of Safety and Security (Peter Mwatile, interview, 27 January 2009).

¹⁸⁶ Bayart (2000: 256-8) draws attention to the ways in which violent practices and the idea of corporal punishment have remained central to the social institutions of the postcolonial state across Africa.

– that enacts these punishments. Benjamin (1978: 286) writes: ‘If violence, violence crowned by fate, is the origin of law, then it may be readily supposed that where the highest violence, that over life and death, occurs in the legal system, the origins of law jut manifestly and fearsomely into existence.’

The above public perceptions are important to note, as they show that the framing of at least certain acts of police violence as corporal punishment does not indicate an isolated feature of ‘cop culture’ but may have some resonance with popular perceptions and social norms. For example, in former Ovamboland, there is a considerable break from the past in the sense that whereas political hostility existed between the earlier police and military forces, and the people, the SFF consists mainly of people from Ovambo backgrounds who are former Swapo exiles, which often ensures close and friendly relations between the general public and force members; they are seen as ‘our sons and brothers’ who represent ‘our government’. Furthermore, their methods of ‘instant justice’, evident in the case I described above, are not necessarily resented by the locals. In the discussions I had with non-SFF members about the force, a combination of fear, respect and derision was common. It is widely perceived that the due course of criminal investigation is painstakingly slow, if it happens at all, due to shortages of transport, personnel, and the like. Many are happy to see criminals get instant punishment instead of receiving lenient treatment, as long as the culprits are correctly identified. This resonates with the widely held local perception of the corrective powers of corporal punishment that I referred to above (see also Buur 2005; Jefferson 2005). Thus, the work of the SFF in Ovamboland approaches ‘policing by consent’, although it does not reflect a soft, civilian form of policing informed by human rights discourse and corresponding to the individual rights guaranteed in the constitution.¹⁸⁷ Unfortunately, the innocent sometimes also suffer because ‘these uneducated fools’ (as one research participant described them) make mistakes.

This brings us to the elusiveness of the concept of ‘the community’ that has informed Namibian police reforms since independence, and the current vogue of community policing in particular, whose connotations of a unified and harmonious coexistence are rarely, if ever, actually realized. Therefore, it is easy for responsibility for policing to be increasingly vested in an idealised ‘community’ that

¹⁸⁷ In other Namibian regions, however, the perceived continuities between the SFF and its colonial predecessors might be greater.

is expected to share the interests and objectives of the police, whereas members of real communities fail to live up to these expectations because of their deeply ingrained suspicion towards the police, their engagement in illicit economic activities or other reasons. The notion of 'the community' then gives way to a split between 'law-abiding citizens' and 'criminals' or 'troublemakers': into those who cooperate and those who need to be disciplined (see Jensen 2005, 2010). Much of the community is seen to suffer from criminality, low levels of education, poverty and so on, and those who embody these qualities are easily externalized and demonized to become 'police property' (Reiner 2000: 93-4, 214) towards whom the violence threshold is lowered. When a Nampol sergeant was accused of violence by an inmate during an inspection of the Standing Committee on Security of the Parliament, he 'said the police was only using minimum force to apprehend these culprits. He also explained that there was one part of the community that was cooperating with the police and another that was not' (Republic of Namibia 2003: 18).

Together, the rhetorical devices of crime as a pervasive and escalating danger, the lack of respect for the police by the public and the division of community into 'criminals' or 'troublemakers' and 'law-abiding citizens', along with the widespread acceptance of violence framed as the corrective measure of corporal punishment, prepare the ground for situations in which the 'normal condition' gives way to exceptional measures in policing the 'internal frontier' (Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007: 27) of the postcolonial state.

Frontline officialdom and discretion

The previous discussion provides an indication of my answer to the question of why violent police practices prevail even after the transition to independence and regular attempts at police reform. The fact that the actions and justifications of ground-level police officers may at times differ from those at the centres of command is not necessarily an indication of brutality or lack of discipline. Rather, this reflects an influential set of structural conditions: ground-level police officers are less likely to be familiar with the language of the rule of law and human rights than the top brass; they inhabit a different social universe, where locally held ideas of justice and loyalty significantly inform their moral sensibilities and where their action happens

in the context of practical engagements and considerations rather than of abstract reasoning on principles; and, last but not least, frontline police officers are strategically placed at the intersection of law and sovereignty. I will now have a closer look at this intersection.

The function of the police is often seen as law enforcement, an idea that links police practice with the protection of prior rules. However, Benjamin argues forcefully against this:

The assertion that the ends of police violence are always identical or even connected to those of general law is entirely untrue. Rather, the 'law' of the police really marks the point at which the state, whether from impotence or because of the immanent connections within any legal system, can no longer guarantee through the legal system the empirical ends that it desires at any price to attain. (Benjamin 1978: 287.)

Agamben elaborates on this point, linking the police firmly with sovereign power:

If the sovereign...is the one who marks the point of indistinction between violence and right by proclaiming the state of exception and suspending the validity of the law, the police are always operating within a similar state of exception. The rationales of 'public order' and 'security' on which the police have to decide on a case-by-case basis define an area of indistinction between violence and right that is exactly symmetrical to that of sovereignty. (Agamben 2000: 104.)

However, Benjamin goes further to qualify this point by drawing a distinction between lawmaking and law-preserving violence. He argues that the police occupy a particular place in society as an institution that combines the two forms:

In a kind of spectral mixture, these two forms are present in...the police...This is violence for legal ends...but with the simultaneous authority to decide these ends itself within wide limits...Police violence...is lawmaking, for its characteristic function is not the promulgation of laws but the assertion of legal claims for any decree, and law-preserving, because it is at the disposal of these ends. (Benjamin 1978: 286-7; see also Hussain 2003: 124.)

Thus, the distinction between law-making and law-preserving violence should be treated as an analytical one rather than as demarcating real situations. Acts of violence can perform both functions; they can both deliver a corrective message, relating to a prior norm (which can be legal but also unofficial, albeit widely accepted) and send a more profound message to the general public about where power is vested in the final instance, thereby reconstituting practical norms.

In the beating of the suspects described above, violence did not just ‘erupt’ spontaneously, reflecting a breakdown of cultural inhibitions. Rather, it followed a choreography that revealed that it was not a singular, isolated event. Although the SFF policemen were clearly excited, their violence was measured and constrained, severe enough to cause pain but not, in all probability, to lead to serious injuries; they were taking care not to exceed specific, self-defined limits in the force they applied.¹⁸⁸ Clearly, they were asserting their own and the state’s authority rather than referring to a prior rule – in other words, this was lawmaking violence. At the same time, they framed their actions as part of their duty of maintaining law and order. Their violence was supposedly corrective, a considered exercise of justice that referred to a pre-existing norm, even if not to the letter of the law. In this sense, it was also law-preserving violence.

In his historical account of British responses to colonial emergencies, Hussain (2003: 104) identifies the correct amount of force to be employed at times of unrest as a recurring problem. Interestingly, we find the same problem codified in modern Namibian police legislation. Members of the police force are mandatory holders of the aspiration to maintain a monopoly over legitimate violence that is fundamental to the state’s existence. Yet, at the same time, they are expected to live up to the expectations of a pervasive human rights ideology according to which they should refrain from using violence. The uneasy compromise of dealing with this dilemma is the talk, recurrent in my data, of ‘proportional’ or ‘minimum’ force, which refers to the requirement that police officers mete out force according to the threat that they or the public faces. Force is to be used only to the degree that is necessary to achieve such immediate objectives as restoring order or carrying out an arrest. As phrased in the Police Act, chapter II, section 14(10): ‘Any member may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime or in effecting or assisting in the lawful arrest of an offender or suspended offender or person unlawfully at large.’ In the Nampol operational manual (Chapter 2, C4), the same idea is framed by the following pragmatic expression: ‘A member shall use only as much force as is necessary to make an arrest or prevent an escape.’ When discussing the situation of arrest, the same manual states (Chapter 2, H7):

¹⁸⁸ Obviously, this is not always the case.

As a rule there should be no need for the use of force, and, in every case where it may be necessary, only such force as is absolutely necessary to overcome resistance to the arrest, may be used. No justification whatsoever exists for unnecessarily beating, kicking or otherwise ill-treating an arrested person and there is no excuse whatsoever for a member to act in this manner.

And further, on presumption of innocence (Chapter 2, H8):

An arrested person has a right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty by a court of law. A member, who arrests a person must therefore, at all times, control himself or herself and must never allow his or her belief in the guilt of the arrested person to move him or her to treat the arrested person in a manner which would 'punish' the person for what the member believes that the person has done.

In principle, however, even lethal force can be used. According to section 49 of the still applicable Criminal Procedure Act of 1977, killing a person suspected of a serious offence who cannot be prevented from fleeing by other means is to be considered justifiable homicide.¹⁸⁹ In other words, use of force by the police is governed by legal rules through the concept of minimum force, but this concept does not dictate any absolute limits, pivoting instead on the idea of reactive proportionality. As the police are, in practice, faced with a heterogeneous assembly of different situations involving different actors, the use of 'minimum force' is anything but a mechanical application of a standard. It is rather an act of interpretation and negotiation between police officers, suspects and the public.¹⁹⁰ This also means that the top-down directives of human rights reforms are increasingly difficult to apply the closer one moves down the institutional hierarchy towards face-to-face encounters with the public, an issue that is often referenced by the notion of discretion. As Hornberger (2009: 97) notes, police discretion has often been seen as an essential element of policing 'in its bridging of the gap between the general character of the law and the particularity of real life situations'. That the police often exceed the minimum may indicate the difficulty of establishing the correct amount of force in a given situation: in other words, misguided discretion.

¹⁸⁹ A new Criminal Procedure Act was promulgated in 2004 but is not yet in operation. The new act retains the option of using lethal force to prevent a suspected serious offender from fleeing (section 51).

¹⁹⁰ Tellingly, the only reference to concrete situations in the section discussing proportional force in the Namibian Police Human Rights Manual is to state that 'it will be extremely disproportionate to seriously injure a person, when arresting him for stealing an apple' (Legal Assistance Centre 2000: 160).

But there is more to the matter. More fundamentally, the discretion of the frontline officer is an indication of a degree of permanent exception where legal dictum gives way to situational decision. The police hold a particular place as delegates of the monopoly of force in the division of labour of modern postcolonial society under normal conditions. Unlike the archaic figure of the sovereign monarch, theirs is a form of sovereignty dispersed between multiple agents in the multiple fleeting situations and decisions of everyday existence, yet consequential in its cumulative effect. Ultimately, the power dispersal in modern states, combined with the banishment of violence in the human rights ideology, conspire to relegate the sovereign power of decision to the frontline, to police officers who embody the state in their encounters with the population. This places ground-level police officers in a problematic situation where they are mandated and, in some cases, required to engage in violent acts, even though this may result in their being disciplined or punished if such acts come under formal scrutiny.

Police discretion is thus a potential space of violence and consequently an important object of control in human rights reforms. The frontline functionaries of state security organs stand at the threshold between the legal realm governed by official, public rules, and the performance of sovereignty and ‘will to govern’ through violent acts of absolute control. The obsession with civilian supervision of security apparatuses and with the education and monitoring of their operatives arises precisely out of recognising their fundamentally coercive mandate. However, human rights reformers stop short of actually analysing the relationship between law and sovereignty and thus fail to understand the structural position of security agencies. Instead, they propose that the problem is insufficient knowledge of, and socialisation in, legal norms, thus suggesting that the solution lies in educating the members. We could say that such reforms largely attempt to codify discretion. Additionally, such reforms aim at instilling a professional, responsible and communicative attitude (see Hornberger 2009: 84): that is, a form of governmental self-regulation among police officers. However, the variety and immediacy of ‘emergency’ situations effectively runs counter to such attempts, so that the abstract principles of reform and the decisions made in practical situations are not easily bridged. Human rights reforms attempt to bring the general principles and procedures seen as markers of mature legal systems into practice (Hussain 2003: 120-1), but if we take the mutually constitutive relation of law and sovereignty into account, these reforms seek to

achieve the impossible, for legality can never subsume the element of sovereign decision actualized in discretion. As Hussain (2003: 124) notes, following Benjamin: ‘The police in their discretion necessarily mix the right of disposition (to enforce a prior sanction) with right of decree (to insist on the instance of a need for a sanction).’

The structural position of the police between law and decision, between enforcing and (re)creating the law, is a challenging one for the officers to navigate. The increased concern with human rights and related mechanisms for overseeing implementation has brought this dilemma sharply into focus. To cope, security agencies generally, and not just in Namibia, develop subcultures of socialisation and informal normativity and these facilitate internal solidarities and the negotiation of rules (Reiner 2000: 171-2). The coexistence of the official code with unofficial norms is illustrated by the interaction between Neto and his underlings. Most of the time, Neto’s behaviour and appearance did not differ much from that of other force members. Both he and his junior colleagues clearly thought that he was one of them, with the same exile foot-soldier background, and he shared in their daily patrols as well as leisure activities. It was only in situations that clearly contravened official rules that heightened awareness about his different position became apparent, such as my photographing the officers in uniform, Pine and Emil’s AWOL-ing, or the incident of violence towards suspects described above. In such cases, he either distanced himself from any questionable behaviour, or the others tried to take care that he did not know – or would not have to admit that he knew – what they were doing. It was clear that he was not strict when it came to following the rules, but he was also aware of his position and the responsibility invested in it, and tried to make sure that he was not caught breaking the rules himself.

Techniques of evasion may also be practiced, such as delaying investigations, ‘mislaying’ docket, or ensuring that certain events could not be proven afterwards. Instead of real accountability, the systems of monitoring, discipline and punishment might sometimes merely create an impression of accountability, no matter how real or fictitious their relation to the actual situation on the ground. Official regulations and norms can also be drawn upon to justify actions. As the Parliament’s Standing Committee on Security reported about one police station: ‘The detainees complained about foul language and beatings that they experience at the hands of police officers. The officers denied any beatings of

inmates but confirmed that minimum force might be used to effect an arrest if a person is resisting arrest.’ (Republic of Namibia 2002: 4.)

Here, the rhetoric of rights offers an instrument whereby detainees may complain, while the notion of ‘minimum force’ offers an instrument for law enforcement officers to justify violence as a necessary, measured and controlled response. The democratic framework, especially insofar as it involves media freedom, creates a need for the police to be both well versed in human rights and expert at public relations in order to speak the right language when the need arises. Despite this tall order, however, the practical coexistence of repeated offences and reiterated commitments to human rights makes it clear that such apparently irreconcilable forces as human rights instruments and violent state practices can find ways of reaching a compromise.

Violence lurks beneath the surface of legalized government, at times closer, at times more distant, but ever present as an optional modality of rule. Crucially, it does not necessarily happen in the open but can also act as a latent threat, as a condition that constrains social action even during ‘normal’ times. These issues are perhaps particularly acute in the case of the SFF who patrol close to the territorial borders of the state and in other marginal areas, as Home Affairs minister Ekandjo explained (see p. 157). In these spaces, the reach of state power has always been less complete than elsewhere, hence the need for its assertion. This need is heightened by the presence of the border, which requires the enactment of statehood in territorialized forms of control, through defining and negotiating licit and illicit forms of material and human cross-border flows and how they are to be regulated. However, it is not merely at territorial borders that sovereignty has to be enacted. As Das and Poole (2004) argue, the state meets the limits of its sovereignty not only at its geographic margins but also in other spaces and acts of contestation, as the above discussion on ‘crime’ and ‘community’ should demonstrate. The boundaries of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ are constantly being defined, and here the police play an important role.

This raises further questions about whose sovereignty we are actually discussing. To what extent is it unquestionably state sovereignty, and to what extent is it rather a matter of who currently wields power in the name of the state, nationally and locally? Is it completely a property of ‘the state’, of the ruling party,

of police agency, or of individual officers?¹⁹¹ I do not have definite answers to these questions; rather, they point towards the importance of examining the activities of frontline officials, or street-level bureaucrats as Lipsky (2010) calls them, and their role in the construction of everyday statehood.

Violence professionals

Structures of violence do not reproduce themselves without mediation. They do not stand apart from the agency, experiences and imaginations of those involved. Violence is carried out by real persons in particular contexts, which raises the question of the motivations or driving forces of those who engage in it. One common response is simply to demonize perpetrators of violent actions as somehow deviant or lacking in humanity, as having degraded into a ‘new barbarism’ (McMullin 2013b: 393-4). Another line of argumentation treats ex-combatants as individual strategists or choice-makers. While this view laudably accords ex-combatants the dignity of being seen as rational subjects, it risks cutting them off from their particular social universe and contributing to the imagery of universal, acontextual ex-combatantness.¹⁹² To counter these arguments, I contend that it is better to examine how violent ways become part of the subjectivity of those who practice violence as an element of their meaningful and inescapably social existence (Whitehead 2004a and 2004b). Instead of taking the violence they engage in as proof of their inhumanity or lack of civility, one should try to understand why they practice it.

While traversing the physical landscapes of Pine and his colleagues, we were simultaneously travelling through a web of meaningful practices that are central to their social existence. In this web, expressions of political loyalty, romanticized

¹⁹¹ As Emil’s bar brawl demonstrates, violence can certainly fulfil personal or parochial agendas in situations where state power is called upon more as a resource than as a principle to defend or enforce.

¹⁹² For example, Barrett (2011) categorizes ex-combatants into six different types on the basis of interviews with them and their colleagues. While it is commendable to search for detailed empirical insights on the views of ex-combatants, his approach raises the question of what such findings concerning the ‘types of individuals’ (ibid.: 749) actually reflect. Do they reveal real and lasting motivations that would justify the label of ‘type’, or are they shifting and overlapping indications of choices between available labels and narrative resources that offer retrospective, intersubjectively formed explanations that are deemed reasonable in the context where they occur?

gangsterism and daily practices of work and leisure come together in a potent mixture that manifests political allegiance and masculinity in an emotional and tangible way. Intimately linked with this are various forms of violence that range from tales of a rough lifestyle as a youngster, to exile discipline, and on to the 'hot action' involved in quelling the Caprivi secession attempt: patrolling with uniforms and guns and being ready to fight and shoot when necessary. Sensory and emotionally charged acts of violence like the beating of suspects described above served to build and affirm ties between the force members and the state, as did Pine's showing off in his uniform and his satisfaction with his ability to 'walk 20 kilometres without any problem'. These acts created a sense of both 'owning' the state and belonging to it, of embodying its sovereignty and power. Experientially, then, reintegration and remobilization combine into a kind of governmentality in which lasting attachments have been produced through practices of war-time social organization, political education, rituals and symbols of party identity, registrations, employment and shared reminiscence.

Acts of violence carried out by SFF members also served to affirm their masculinity and strengthen their male camaraderie. While the link between violence and masculinity might not be a necessary one, violence forms an integral part of hegemonic masculinity in many different sociocultural contexts around the world (see i.a. Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Morrell ed. 2001; Hutchinson and Jok 2002; Heald 1999). As gender is a fundamental aspect of social existence and operates across the broad spectrum of social relations, intimately intersecting with power, the gendering of violence powerfully facilitates its internalisation as an element of subjectivities. Namibia has a longstanding legacy of violence, with men as its primary agents. On a macroscopic level, organized and structural violence became entrenched as an integral part of Namibian society with the techniques of colonial rule. It is a legacy that was perpetuated in the open conflict of the 'liberation struggle,' is built into the extreme socioeconomic inequalities of the present and also continues in the celebration of 'power from the barrel of a gun' in the nationalist imagery of history. On a microscopic level, it has manifested in a

high prevalence of male brawls, domestic violence and rape. In this sense, Pine and his colleagues were continuing a long tradition.¹⁹³

On the one hand, then, the SFF members discussed in this chapter were subjected to regimenting practices that harnessed and restrained their agency. On the other, their police employment appeared empowering in the sense of giving them a meaningful niche in the local social arena, one with considerable power and licence. However, a sense that civilian and police roles and associated violence should not be blurred was apparent. What Emil was trying to do by changing into his uniform and getting his gun in order to take revenge on those who fought with him reveals the magic of the uniform and the associated power of the police to make violence right by depersonalising it. He was drawing forth and harnessing state power by resorting to its visible signs; in other words, ‘putting on the state’.¹⁹⁴ Instead of engendering responsibility and predictability in terms of the use of violence, the police position here seemed to engender a licence to resort to violence in the name of the state. However, Emil’s colleagues did not endorse such an extension of police authority into the private sphere. Likewise, Pine distinguished between police violence emanating from his assault rifle, and civil or private violence emanating from his knife, which reflected ideas of proper and improper situations and kinds of violence and associated restraint. In other words, frontline police are not just rule-followers but also rule-makers; the fact that they may deviate from official guidelines does not mean that there are no norms regulating their conduct.

In sum, although the violent potential of ex-combatants does not reflect primordial tendencies stemming from specific personality types, it may be supported by deeply ingrained structures of identity that have arisen from particular forms of socialization. In Pine’s case, for example, these include the circumstances in which he grew up as well as his military training and exile experiences. When combined with his living environment after returning to Namibia and his remobilization as a police officer in a paramilitary frontier environment, these produced a life history where violence was experienced and used at various points and normalized as a possible course of action. While the perceived requirements of security and order, and a lay acceptance of violence as ‘corporal punishment’, comprise the demand

¹⁹³ And if it were up to Pine, it would continue. Talking about the upbringing of children, he said that a boy should be brought up in a tough manner lest he become a sissy.

¹⁹⁴ I am indebted to Steffen Jensen for this expression.

side for the reproduction of violent practices, Pine's forms of socialization, and the sense of reward, recognition and power associated with wielding violence in the name of the state, clearly contribute to its supply, or motivational aspect.

The general point, then, is that ex-combatants are not inherently violent. Rather, they are professionals of violence, socialized and trained to become such, and likely to embody a propensity to use violence, especially if their social environment tolerates or even requires it. They have a set of technical and organizational skills that can be put to many uses depending on what they anticipate in the way of return – be it political, economic, social or emotional – which in turn depends on the institutional context. Economically, choices may include a return to rebel forces, remobilization in state security forces, employment in the private security sector or the informal use of ex-combatant networks and command structures in the informal economy as, for example, in the case of West and Central African motorcycle taximen or diamond miners (see e.g. McMullin 2013b: 401; Bürge 2011: 69; Menzel 2011; Reno 2009: 315). In Namibia, ex-combatants mobilized this potential to press for recognition and it has been further nurtured, for many, by their redeployment in structures of organized violence. As violence lies at the core of statehood in the sense that political authorities attempt to concentrate its legitimate exercise under their own control and ban its alternative sources and forms, ex-combatants, grown and groomed into a violent lifestyle, may constitute a potential risk. Yet, at the same time, their capacity for violence can be turned into a resource from the point of view of those holding political power and, certainly, Namibian political leaders and bureaucrats have sought to harness the worrisome agency of the ex-combatant.¹⁹⁵ However, the way in which this has been realized recycles violent imageries, scripts and subjectivities.¹⁹⁶ Through their histories and current experiences, violence has become an integral part of these ex-combatants' existence, controlled and channelled into certain directions, yet always close to spilling over in ways not officially sanctioned, and often blurring the lines between legitimate and illegitimate.

¹⁹⁵ See Christensen and Utas (2008: 538-9) for a brief discussion on the domestication of violence in Sierra Leone, and employing ex-combatants in the police as a particular sphere where it happens.

¹⁹⁶ Nordstrom (2004c: 226, 238-9) draws attention to the 'tomorrow of violence' in reference to the history and long-term effects of violence, resulting in its cyclical reproduction. See also Whitehead (2004a: 13, 16) on the 'cultural loops' of violence.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the transition of Swapo ex-combatants into paramilitary police and the reasons, uses, meanings and social consequences of violence in their lives. After having grown up within a context of organized violence during the war, ex-combatants were marginalized immediately after independence. Only when they applied pressure on the authorities were they identified as a social problem – partly due to their perceived potential for violence – and also as national heroes who deserved to be recognized due to their wartime sacrifices. This led to the cementing of the category of ‘ex-combatant’ and enhanced identification with it through techniques of reintegration; via the route of public employment, they moved from a position of marginalization to become representatives of the central authority.

In some respects the SFF has been a way for the Swapo government to kill many birds with one stone. Providing jobs offered a means to defuse widespread frustration and resentment among unemployed ex-combatants, meanwhile securing the continuation of their allegiance to the ruling party. However, their loyalty cannot be explained simply by virtue of its anticipated material benefits; rather, reintegration should be seen from the perspective of former exiles’ personal histories. As we have seen with Pine and his colleagues, both narrative imagination and embodied practices have a direct link to emotions in creating a potent force for producing particular political identities. When the two can be meaningfully combined, and the past and the present do not contradict each other, we have a powerful mixture that enables the creation and maintenance of compliant subjectivities. While public jobs and other benefits have served to nurture former exiles’ existential and emotional attachment to Swapo, the origins of this relationship stretch much further back in time and involve relatively enduring constructions of identity and political subjectivity. Finally, by turning ex-combatants into a loyal ground force in the borderlands and at internal frontiers, reintegration offered a relatively cheap way to increase police presence in areas previously scantily reached by state agencies. With predominantly former exile membership, the SFF sends out a powerful message that Swapo is firmly at the helm of power and controls the core security apparatuses of the state.

Meanwhile, the violence of the former exiles has multiple roots. It is, first, simply a practical way of getting their job done, a product of coping with the daily

realities and demands of SFF duties. Second, it is an institutionalised practice that is informally tolerated and potentially productive of political power. Third, it is a deeply ingrained way of dealing with conflicts, establishing authority, enacting liberty and performing sovereign power, something which is necessarily ambiguous at the frontiers of the state. During the war, Swapo cadres in exile were encouraged to see collective violence in the form of armed struggle as a cornerstone of national liberation. After independence, this view continues in the commemoration of the struggle as a military affair, stressing the heroic sacrifices of the freedom fighters (see Chapter 8). The remobilization of these ex-combatants in the security forces has nurtured their violent potential to reappear at the territorial, social and political margins of the state. In their employment in the SFF, these ex-combatants have been involved in 'states of exception' in border areas, situations closer to military action than ordinary police work, and easier to place within grand narratives of national integrity and sovereignty.

Since independence, the Namibian Police has attempted to extend a liberal mode of policing from the white minority to all citizens, a programme that has its challenges: associated procedural legality and human rights norms remain in tension with multiple perceived challenges to order and security, such as crime, and deeply ingrained structures and ideas of inequality and difference that feed into continued bifurcation of state-citizen relations. The latter are complemented by authoritarian legacies of policing that are visible in, for example, the dispositions of force members, antagonistic attitudes between the citizenry and the police, and the expectations of the public that 'criminals' be sufficiently punished. The coexistence of police violence and its containment through repeated efforts to reform the police highlights the way in which the police stand at a strategic crossroads between 'law-founding' and 'law-preserving' violence, contributing both to the constitution of the sovereignty of the Namibian state and to its consolidation as the established and legitimate locus of political power. The excess violence that descends on marginal or unruly subjects and spaces works to institute the legal order of the state, to imprint state presence over its territory and population. Meanwhile, official regulations and procedures, the language of legality and the promise of redress work towards firming up the impression of a predictable and transparent regime that abides by its laws and is therefore qualitatively different and more legitimate than its predecessors. In this way, the citizenry is called upon to become complicit with the

regime as legal subjects, while the considerable amount of discretion that frontline law enforcement agencies have in their interactions with citizens bridges the tension between rights and freedoms, on the one hand, and order and security, on the other. In more general terms, this distinction can be portrayed as one between norms and rules codified in the law, and sovereign violence above or beyond the law.

Standing at the interface between central government and local realities, giving the ruling party and the state a grassroots profile while at the same time being embedded in local conditions and social relations, the SFF frontline police can move ‘across...the seemingly clear divide separating legal and extralegal forms of punishment and enforcement’ (Das and Poole 2004: 14; see also Poole 2004). They are not an example of outsourcing of security functions but nor are they quite ‘proper’ police either (as pointed out by many members of the public and admitted by Minister Ekandjo); they are somewhere in between. Officially an element of public authority through the core state institution of the police, they operate in a way that constantly bends the official rules of their calling. Indeed, the division between state and non-state agencies might be too rigid to be fruitful in making sense of the complex realities of power and authority in Africa (see Hansen and Stepputat 2006: 306). Not only are there multiple ‘non-state’ institutions involved in these activities, but ‘the state’ itself is heterogeneous, with different agencies and people at different levels of those agencies all having multiple agendas and drawing on multiple self-perceptions and normative codes to guide their actions. This observation is supported by many recent studies of the daily practices of African politics and governance. Blundo (2006: 803, 815), among others, has drawn attention to how administrative practice involving multiple actors with varying degrees of official status creates shared standards that are different from those defined by bureaucratic organizations. A similar recognition of plural norms and concomitant practices of regulation and administration also emerges from Roitman’s (2004) analysis. What is significant is that not all ‘twilight institutions’ (Lund 2006a, 2006b) operate beyond the official purview of the state; some of them may actually consist of frontline functionaries who find space in their daily practice for bending norms in order to negotiate an unofficial normative ground, while at the same time drawing upon official structures, statutes and positions for authority.

It is precisely this in-between character that strategically identifies the SFF members discussed in this chapter as instruments in consolidating a mode of

sovereignty whose baptism in anti-colonial violence maintains its constitutive salience; certainly they embody this foundational principle (see Agamben 2000: 103-107). The violence they perpetrate is sufficiently concealed to continue, yet performative at the same time. On the one hand, it hammers home to the general public, by way of the media attention given to violent exchanges, the sovereignty of the state in the borderlands and at internal frontiers such as former 'native' areas and townships, and the symbolic margins that 'criminality' and community imperfections construct. On the other hand, it is experientially rewarding for force members to enact their relation to the state, the party and, last but not least, to each other as a community formed over time in militarist masculine practices. Carrying the history and possibility – and therefore, fear – of marginality within themselves, they are there to identify and lash out against other marginalities perceived as dangerous: whether classified as 'secessionists', 'UNITA bandits', 'illegal' immigrants, plain criminals, or anyone who happens to fall out of grace with the prevailing powers.

8 THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES? THE SPECTRE OF LIBERATION AND THE INCLUSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS OF VETERAN POLITICS

The preceding chapters have dealt with the general dynamics of reintegration and the specific case of its core target group of former Swapo exiles. This chapter concentrates on the making and crossing of boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in reintegration over time, paying particular attention to the ways in which the politics of remembering, and references to the liberation struggle, have influenced the drawing of classificatory lines. As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, former Swapo exiles and Swapo members in the government and administration have been the main parties in the long-term negotiation that constitutes the ex-combatant issue in Namibia. Reintegration has particularly favoured those who have been the most prominently identified both as a social problem or threat and as national heroes, that is, in particular, male Swapo ex-combatants with military training and experience. Other groups of potential reintegrees have occupied more marginal positions in reintegration, with different, shifting degrees of inclusion and exclusion. They include former Namibian troops who fought on the South African side as part of South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF) and the Koevoet paramilitary police unit engaged in the bush war in the northern Ovambo regions; formerly exiled youths; and ex-combatants eligible for reintegration benefits but who have decided to avoid them. Additionally, while formerly exiled women have become mainstream reintegration beneficiaries during and after the Peace Project, their relationship to reintegration initiatives has been more ambiguous than that of their male comrades.

The language of liberation heroism has been a significant tool in making these distinctions. Despite taking place in the present and being oriented towards the future, the politics of reintegration examined in the preceding chapters is motivated and justified by references to recent Namibian political history. The recurrent references to the 'liberation struggle' made by demonstrating ex-combatants, by Pine and his friends, by Sam Nujoma and other political authorities or by The

Technical Committee on Ex-combatants and other government bodies are not isolated or of their own invention. They are examples of utterances that belong to an established version of Namibia's history first produced by Swapo and its allies during their campaign for Namibia's independence. In order to properly understand the claims and arguments made in the negotiation between ex-combatants and political authorities, it is important to examine this historical narrative and the ways in which it has been contested.

The significance of such historical interpretations is by no means restricted to the ex-combatant issue. References to the liberation struggle keep recurring in debates over land, jobs and education in public statements, parliamentary speeches, the media, and among members of the public. Likewise, the debates on jobs and compensation and the treatment of ex-combatants or war veterans clearly reflect current concerns, but the actors involved often back their arguments with references to the past. This phenomenon is not restricted to Namibia. Similar patterns can be observed in other African post-liberation states (Kriger 2006; Schafer 2007; Dorman 2006). This chapter digs more deeply into this interplay between the past and the present, looking into how public remembering influences political subjectivities, negotiation of state power and distribution of resources. I examine how the grand narratives and personal versions of liberation history have influenced the shifting boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in reintegration.

The social construction of the past has been examined in a growing body of studies focusing on Africa (e.g. Alexander, McGregor and Ranger 2000; Cole 2001; Malkki 1995; Werbner ed. 1998; Tonkin 1992; Uusihakala 2008). As Berliner (2005) notes, the blossoming of 'social memory' studies has also contributed to an increasing vagueness of the concept which risks becoming indistinguishable from 'culture' and its reproduction. My use of 'remembering' here refers to the ways in which personal experiences interweave with shared notions and narrative schemes in perceiving the past in the present.¹⁹⁷ Remembrances are rarely just about a particular fact or event *per se*, but rather about their meaning and emotive significance, which only emerges in connection with other things remembered and currently experienced. The past is re-evaluated in the light of current conditions, on the one

¹⁹⁷ As such, it is distinct from but connected to past experiences that are not actively remembered but are still reflected in the present, whether as routinized bodily practices or emotional dispositions. The latter will also be discussed to some extent here, e.g. in connection with the systematic forgetting or silencing of certain issues.

hand, and the present is experienced in the light of our understanding of the past, on the other. Memories tend to cluster into narratives, that is, relatively coherent, meaningful sequences (MacIntyre 1997; Ricoeur 1991: 21-22), a process that is not entirely personal and involves fitting individual remembrances together with those of others. In other words, personal memories interact with shared interpretive frameworks and collective narratives of history (Tonkin 1992; Samuel and Thompson 1990; Thomson 1990), thereby influencing what can be remembered and in which light (see Portelli 1990). Furthermore, not all things remembered can be voiced publicly, meaning that the collective labour of history production sets limits on political possibilities, while politics inform historical interpretations. In a country like Namibia that has recently undergone a transition to political independence, these processes are crucial, as they inform ideas of the nation and shape practices of statehood and citizenship.

Namibia achieved independence considerably later than most current African states against a background of authoritarian settler colonialism, protracted war and a liberation movement turned ruling party. Such local factors play an important part in determining the interplay between statehood, citizenship and vocabularies of belonging. This implies that a dominant narrative of national liberation, associated with the ruling party Swapo, has played a crucial role as the hinge that opens and shuts the door of inclusion and exclusion in reintegration and veteran policies. Its casting of Swapo ex-combatants as heroes has propelled recurrent ex-combatant demands and relegated those who fought on the South African side to a secondary category in reintegration. At the same time, this frame restrains ex-combatant recollections, pushing aside contentious memories that might lead to a more critical historical consciousness.

In this chapter, my focus is, first, on the processes of inclusion; in other words, the ways in which life histories and statements that link the past and the present have justified ex-combatant demands and produced the social categorizations that have privileged Swapo ex-combatants and militant remembrances. Second, I focus on the other side of the coin, the exclusions of alternative memories and those who fought on the 'wrong' side that are justified by the same statements. However, it should be noted that the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion have not been fixed and stable. On the contrary, their malleability, negotiability and, hence, political character has been a key feature of Namibian

reintegration. Lastly, I discuss recent developments in these dualist memory politics and their implications for Namibian state–citizen linkages. The issues dealt with include the continued importance in current politics of reminiscences harking back to the preindependence period, the special status of ex-combatants in the Namibian political landscape, the rhetoric of the ruling party in speaking about the past, the question of who should be considered a hero and what should be the practical consequences of such recognition, and to what degree the realization of one’s citizenship and its benefits should depend on participation in the liberation struggle.¹⁹⁸

THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE AND THE BONDS OF LOYALTY

During the independence war, Swapo and its international allies gradually cemented a particular nationalist version of Namibia’s history.¹⁹⁹ This narrative was published in a number of forms, such as pamphlets, schoolbooks and popularized history books.²⁰⁰ Apart from such general accounts, the liberation struggle was also personified in autobiographical and biographical narratives that portrayed Swapo leaders as national heroes.²⁰¹ In these accounts, the experiences of individuals are placed firmly within the grand historical narrative so that they become instances of

¹⁹⁸ There is a further field of Namibian memory politics that is immensely important but too broad to be addressed here, namely the various ethnic, regional or local versions of political history and belonging that stand in contrast to or speak beyond liberationist history. See, for example, Kössler (2007); Fairweather (2006); Friedman (2005 and 2011).

¹⁹⁹ This section partly draws on Metsola (2001).

²⁰⁰ For examples, see Catholic Institute for International Relations (1989); Hishongwa (1983 and 1992); International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (1989); Green, Kiljunen and Kiljunen eds (1981); Kaakunga (1990); Katjavivi (1986 and 1988); König (1983); Liberation Support Movement (1973, n.d. [1976] and 1978); Mbuende (1986); Melber (1986); Moleah (1983); Swapo (1976a, 1976b, 1978a, 1978b and 1981); United Nations Institute for Namibia (1987); Williams (1987); Wood ed. (1988); Namakalu (2004); and the following bulletins, all published by Swapo: *The Combatant*, *Namibia News*, *Namibia Today*, *Namibia Youth*, *Namibia Woman*, and *Swapo Information Bulletin*. For a collection of visual examples, see Miescher and Henrichsen (2004: 20–35, 70–73).

²⁰¹ The magnum opus of this genre is Sam Nujoma’s autobiography (Nujoma 2001). Other accounts include Angula (1990); Namhila (2005); Ndadi (1989); Shityuwete (1990); Ya-Otto (1982); Schivute (1997); Shamena and Shamena (1980); Liberation Support Movement (1973) and numerous short interviews or autobiographical writings. For analyses, see Haarhof (1989) and Saunders (2003 and 2007).

the common fate and aspirations of the nation.²⁰² Taken together, these accounts amalgamate to form a 'liberation narrative' that is grounded in a binary image of colonial domination versus a united nationalist-revolutionary resistance by 'the masses' under Swapo's leadership and helped by international 'progressive forces': a strongly teleological construction as the nation, the 'Namibian people', inevitably emerges from colonial oppression and unites to fulfil history as the natural outcome of independence.²⁰³ The narrative also offers a template for individual subjectivity in the image of a heroic 'freedom fighter' as opposed to 'Boers' and 'collaborators'.

Certain themes and events recur in this literature and the visual imagery that accompanies it. Usually the narrative starts with life in the precolonial societies of Namibia, then moves on to colonial conquest and the associated predations of the colonial powers, particularly the war of the Germans against the Herero and Nama in 1904-07. Themes covered in describing life under German and South African rule include the poverty and repression faced by the black majority exemplified by contract labour, the homeland system, Bantu education and pass laws, and police and army brutality – all of which are contrasted with white affluence. Early anti-colonial resistance is noted as the precursor to Namibian nationalism and the formation of nationalist movements such as SWANU, Swapo's predecessors the Ovamboland People's Congress (OPC) and Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO), and finally, Swapo itself. The theme of nationalist resistance covers events both inside Namibia and in exile. In Namibia, such events include mass demonstrations, the major strike of contract labourers in 1971-72, the efforts of Swapo leaders based inside the country, the involvement of Namibian churches, popular support for PLAN's war efforts as well as the student, worker and

²⁰² To a reader accustomed to the modern Western autobiographical genre that assumes that narrated life portrays inner states, their interpretation and evaluation, and personal growth or change, these accounts might seem incomplete. They do not focus on self-reflection, individual agency or conflict and negotiation between the individual and the collective. Rather, they concentrate on the public, political life of the subject while personal life is largely bypassed. Haarhof (1989: 91, 93, 94) finds this 'emphasis...on...a people rather than the private life of an individual' problematic because the 'purging of human ambiguity and inconsistency makes the life stories...less human and less convincing'. However, I find this a somewhat misplaced expectation. Not only is the kind of self-accounting expected by Haarhof a historically and culturally particular form of narrating a life, one has to remember that Namibian struggle autobiographies were primarily motivated by the goal of raising support for the liberation movement and establishing and maintaining commitment among its cadres. Hence their collectivist focus.

²⁰³ See, for example, the tables of contents in Swapo (1981); Katjavivi (1988); or International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (1989).

community-based resistance of the 1980s.²⁰⁴ In exile, the establishment of Swapo's civilian, military, educational and diplomatic structures are included, as are successes of PLAN operations, schooling, health care, and farming and construction in Swapo camps in exile. All of the above build up to the glorious climax: the Constituent Assembly elections in 1989, the return of the exiles and the formal attainment of independence in 1990.

Before Namibia's independence, the liberation narrative was significant in challenging South African rule and rallying support for Swapo both in Namibia and internationally. It also formed the backbone of the political instruction Swapo cadres received in exile. As Nujoma's speech (quoted on pp. 112-113) attests, this narrative has not lost its significance, but has been transformed into a state-sponsored founding myth of the nation's origins and its ideal form which legitimates the present power constellation (Hunter 2008; Melber 2005b; Saunders 2007; Becker 2011). The speech illuminates a number of important aspects regarding Namibian public memory and the place of ex-combatants within it. These include a clear division of society into us and them, that is, those who fought for national liberation versus the allies of the South African occupation regime; the claim that participation in the struggle was voluntary; extending the credit for liberation to all those who suffered from colonialism and contributed to the struggle, whether inside or outside Namibia; and stressing that the government has to provide for all Namibians equally.

The liberation narrative has further been inscribed on the physical landscape in the monumental Heroes' Acre with its militant statues, murals and grave sites celebrating the struggle and its 'fallen heroes and heroines' as the text on the pedestal of the statue of the Unknown Soldier states.²⁰⁵ However, it most often appears in statements by Swapo politicians and supporters in Parliament, public events or interviews. Importantly, it is not restricted to accounts of the past; rather, its powerful dual imagery of 'us' and 'them' is constantly transplanted to the current socio-political arena. It is regularly reproduced in political leaders' statements on current issues, depicting contemporary social forces as either truly patriotic or as the

²⁰⁴ In nationalist literature, this resistance is read as indicative of Swapo's growing support and directly linked to its activities. For a contrasting view, see Leys and Saul (1995b: 81-84).

²⁰⁵ For pictures, articles and analysis of the Heroes' Acre, see *Namibia Review* 11(2), 2002; Kössler (2007: 369-72); Becker (2011: 523-532).

‘enemy’ appearing in various guises including secessionists, imperialists, foreign cultural influences, criminals, or the political opposition. The case of Swapo ex-combatants is one example of this afterlife of liberation. Swapo’s rhetoric has exaggerated the significance of its military campaign and elevated the armed guerrilla into a central figure in the history of liberation.²⁰⁶ Political authorities have used this imagery to justify reintegration measures that have benefited Swapo’s key ex-combatant constituency, while the ex-combatants have drawn on it both to back their demands and for identity and self-esteem.

In an earlier study (Metsola 2001), based on life stories of former Swapo exiles a few years after independence, I found that that their self-portrayal was mostly in accordance with the liberation narrative. Here, one’s own life is firmly linked with belonging to Swapo and the community of exiles unified in the purpose of liberation. In these stories, personal experiences and Namibian history tend to blend so that personal experiences are situated within a narrative of collective resistance and liberation, which in turn gains credibility from personal experiences that confirm it. In a typically liberationist storyline, condensed from various individual narratives, short accounts of a happy and innocent childhood are followed by growing awareness of the colonial evil which blocks the Namibian people’s independence, freedom and possibilities for self-realization. The subject sets out to reclaim them by joining the liberation struggle in exile. The decision to leave and leaving itself are generally seen as a major turning point, recounted vividly and in great detail. Life in exile is portrayed as one of enduring hardships and overcoming obstacles through determination and comradeship, thereby gradually winning the struggle, whether in the military field or in education and other tasks. These sacrifices eventually lead to Namibia’s independence and the return of the exiles, which completes the narrative. Repatriation is the second major turning point in the stories, fulfilling the liberation narrative.

In these stories, the events considered most important and interesting are those that relate most directly to the liberation struggle. Most experiences are only recounted within this context, either by being interpreted so as to fit into it or simply passed over. Likewise, the narrative of the liberation struggle, and one’s own identity as part of the liberation community, emerges to order and give coherence

²⁰⁶ For examples, see Nujoma (2001); Namakalu (2004); Swapo (1981: 259, 262-263). For more critical views, see Brown (1995: 23-32); Cliffe *et al.* (1994: 25-30).

even to those events that happened before active involvement with the struggle, which, in turn, 'explain' and justify what comes after. Such crafting of a shared version of 'liberation' was actively propagated in the written and spoken word and in various daily practices in exile, in particular military training and political classes.

As Pine's story, recounted on p. 152, demonstrates, the liberation narrative was still dominant among former exiles during my fieldwork, even when life stories were updated to the present. It was associated with the idea of enduring links of mutual loyalty and obligation between Swapo and its members which, in the view of former exiles, bound them to Swapo command but at the same time entitled them to special care on the part of the party. This was most clearly the case with those who were adults during the many years that they lived in exile. Younger returnees and those who were in exile only briefly in the late 1980s did not necessarily tie their life narration as closely to Swapo and the liberation struggle.

It might seem surprising that the liberation struggle and personal involvement in it was still so prominent in the stories of former exiles at the time of my fieldwork in 2002-3, nearly fifteen years after the war ended. However, there were good reasons for this: first, the emotional importance and formative capacity of the exile experience; second, the enduring practical significance of previous involvement in the struggle as a basis for claiming recognition and benefits; and, third, the way in which techniques of recognition have facilitated Swapo ex-combatants' maintenance of an uninterrupted account of their lives, in which participation in the struggle can still appear a meaningful part that has been significant for their consequent life course.

Undoubtedly, immediately after independence, the dispersal of exiles and hardships of survival posed a challenge to linking one's life to the narrative of liberation. One reaction to this was nostalgia for exile unity that became idealized in the process. As one former exile told me next to her shack in the then new Ombili area of Katutura back in 1993: 'I sometimes think if I could go back, if Swapo was still there [in Angola], because there in Swapo we never suffered like this.' Some dissatisfied former exiles still expressed similar statements during my fieldwork in 2002-3, with Swapo ex-combatants voicing their grievances publicly. However, instead of turning away from the party, they usually turned towards it, expecting it to reaffirm the bonds of loyalty and mutual obligation – and the techniques of ex-combatant and veteran policies have worked towards this end, as I demonstrated in

Chapters 6 and 7. Recollections of comradeship, collective effort and personal sacrifice in the struggle licensed them to demand greater recognition as loyal cadres (see also Preston, 1997: 458). Thus, for example, the demonstrators of 2006-7 referred to Nujoma as their father even after his hostile outburst (see p. 113).

However, if 'their government' was not responsive, the ex-combatants occasionally departed more radically from professions of loyalty. While most protesting ex-combatants never doubted the fundamental value of the struggle and their part in it, they have at times questioned their linkage to Swapo, arguing that their leaders have betrayed them and are now prospering at the expense of others. This is evident in what I was told by Mandume. He was born and raised in Ovamboland where he lived until he went into exile in the mid-1980s 'to join the liberation struggle', as he put it. After receiving military training in Lubango, Angola, he joined the PLAN. At the time of my fieldwork, he was employed in the Special Field Force, residing in a shack in Katutura with his wife and little child, and gradually paying off his plot of land. This is how he explained his fate, and that of other PLAN combatants, since repatriation:

The suffering started...Waiting and waiting...[My] uncle...called me...that I can do some work...washing dishes...[When] there [wa]s no work anymore...I went back to Ovamboland...[In 1998] the people who were in exile were getting tired, that they must hold a demonstration. I was part of it. We were registered...This was an eye-opener to the government...If we did not demonstrate, the government would have forgotten us...Swapo...told us that once you come to Namibia you're given a car, a proper job, a house and so on...This was only politics and...not true...Some people are paralyzed [or] disabled due to the liberation struggle...We lost a lot of comrades...But we were sacrificing, even vot[ing] for Swapo again...Swapo...is governing this country, and they...have been...in the struggle with us but now they forget us...You were part of the liberation struggle but you didn't get anything in return. You just die as a nothing.

He explained that if compensation could be paid in Zimbabwe, it should also be possible in Namibia, and contrasted the situation of the elite with that of the rank-and-file: 'Compensation [has] been given to some people...[They] have five, six farms. Where do they get the money to buy all these farms?...They should give us...money, even if it's five thousand'. Similar sentiments were expressed in the statements of the demonstrators of 2006-7, made when it seemed that the government would not give in to their demands. Even then, however, their alternative to voting for Swapo was not to vote for another party but simply not to vote at all. Another option was to play on the discursive register that highlights their potentially dangerous and violent character. This can be seen in Ruusa Malulu's

warning that the ex-combatants would invade government ministers' farms (see pp. 115-116). Over the years, the ex-combatants have issued such threats from time to time, occasionally backed by more dramatic ways of making their elite comrades feel uneasy about daring to break the ties forged in exile.

Relations between ex-combatants and the government and ruling party must be situated within a broader spectrum of Namibian political and social realities. Protesting ex-combatants contrasted the sacrifices they made and the dangers they faced during the war with the comfortable life the leaders allegedly lived in exile as well as the current affluence of the elite, claiming that the links of loyalty and obligation that were forged in the liberation struggle ought to persist through the years. They pointed out that while they were told that their demands are unrealistic, other 'volunteers' had benefited from 'affirmative action' and 'black economic empowerment'. This complaint is by no means restricted to ex-combatants. On the contrary, in a context of extreme socioeconomic inequalities, Namibian public opinion widely holds that the political elite, many of them formerly exiled Swapo leaders, accumulates wealth through resettlement schemes, soft loans, jobs for comrades, retirement packages, fishing quotas and mining concessions. At the height of the compensation debate, Gwen Lister, editor of *The Namibian*, was quick to draw attention to this:

'There's no money,' Veterans' Affairs Minister Ngarikutuke Tjiriange told the protestors...Why should they believe him when they look around and see the waste incurred through corruption and mismanagement?...The truly disadvantaged are forced to remain in a state of perpetual deprivation when the already prosperous continue to benefit simply because being black is the key to receiving handouts, no matter your status in life...[O]ur leadership is discriminating against the people, just as the apartheid regime did before. Government simply has to change its definition of 'disadvantaged'. They cannot simply say that everyone with a black skin is eligible for benefits. ('Political perspective', *The Namibian*, 8 June 2007.)²⁰⁷

In other words, the rank-and-file Swapo ex-combatants have used heroic struggle narratives to heighten the unfair nature of the current differences between them and their comrades in exile. Their elite comrades have also recycled struggle narratives but in a different way; they too like to tell stories and show photographs of their freedom fighter past, while retaining a degree of the military code of secrecy. They often pointed out that they too were ex-combatants, alongside those who were

²⁰⁷ For another example, expressing similar sentiments, see "'No" to Nujoma threats', a reader's letter in *The Namibian*, 4 August 2006.

demonstrating and making demands under that banner. Contrary to the angry outbursts of their disadvantaged companions, they tended to play down current differences and reaffirm their unity with their less well-off comrades. What these different uses of struggle narratives have in common is that they both provide a legitimate language of recognition that elevates Swapo ex-combatants above others, compromising the language of reconciliation and the neutrality of bureaucratic arrangements for reintegration.

Apart from the division between the elite and the rank-and-file, the distinction between returnees and remainees is also significant. During the liberation struggle, most of Swapo's senior leadership was in exile. There are widespread feelings that former exiles are favoured unfairly as others also had to suffer from colonial rule and the war, and many were involved in resistance within the country. As a reader's letter in *The Namibian* put it:

Not only those who went to exile liberated the country. There were many people who...played a vital role at home: giving food and shelter to combatants, among others. In the process, they too lost their lives and their houses were burned by the enemy...Will they be allowed to register with the Ministry as any other veteran?...Such people have to be recognised.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ 'Who are the veterans', *the Namibian* 10 November 2006. See also similar letters in *The Namibian* on 4, 8, and 11 August 2006, as well as Andrew Niikondo: 'Ex-combatant Issues And Concerns', *The Namibian* 4 August 2006.

Gwen Lister, editor of *The Namibian*, argued: 'Even if this compensation was possible in practical terms, how would decisions be made as to who got what and how much? How does one measure sacrifice in monetary terms? And to be blunt, the Herero under German genocide or the former fighters in the former People's Liberation Army of Namibia (Plan)...aren't the only ones who did! There are many other groups, not to mention individuals, in Namibia, who have suffered in one way or another under injustice, either in German colonial times; under South African apartheid; or even in Swapo dungeons for that matter. One thing that we do know is that not every person referred to as an 'ex-combatant' was in fact even a fighter at all! Many are simply Namibians who went into exile, but did not necessarily experience the heat of battle...Who, except the majority of whites and black collaborators, didn't suffer under the jackboot of apartheid in one way or another? Swapo failed to make this distinction early on after Independence, and this omission has, it seems, come back to haunt them.' ('Political perspective', *The Namibian*, 1 September 2006.)

This view provides an interesting comparison with what Lister had to say about the ex-combatant issue nearly 15 years earlier: '[T]he former combatants...should not be forgotten because of the sacrifices they ha[ve] made. But we also fe[el] they should not be neglected in the new Namibia because of the inherent dangers posed by thousands of former combatants and soldiers who are unemployed and frustrated, many with easy access to arms.' ('Political perspective', *The Namibian*, 27 November 1992.)

This shift from unqualified support to a much more critical and differentiated view of veteran policies is in line with how general perceptions of the situation and demands of ex-combatants/ veterans have changed over the years.

This distinction between those who went into exile and those who remained in Namibia was frequently evoked in my interaction with both groups. Exchanges between my research assistant and Pine are a good example of this. They were usually ignited by the way my assistant used to tease Pine about his drinking or other behaviour and by Pine's constantly referring to his 'freedom fighter' past. Pine would say: 'You were just going to school and sitting in your father's and mother's house while we were there fighting gun in hand for the liberation of this country.' My assistant would counter: 'We were brave enough to stand the colonial era. You just ran away there to fetch a mattress,²⁰⁹ while we were harassed and beaten here. If everybody ran out of the country, the enemy would have become stronger.' It was not uncommon to hear the remainees complaining that they were branded as 'collaborators'²¹⁰ by the returnees despite the suffering they had endured and the support they had given to the struggle. Notably, these generalizations have not been restricted to the lower rung of the social ladder but have also been expressed by those in the upper political echelons.

While the tone of the exchanges between my assistant and Pine was half-joking, it was also half-serious, linked to notions of masculinity and courage as well as to a concern with who controls the state and thereby gains access to benefits of various kinds. It was a concern of both returnees and remainees that the other party was favoured. According to the remainees, one had to have been in exile in order to get a government job. According to the returnees, the private sector and civil servants inherited from the previous regime were reluctant to employ them. More fundamentally, however, the argument boils down to the criteria applied to qualify as a proper Namibian: specifically, who can legitimately draw on the historical imagery of the struggle for present claims. Nujoma's references to the contributions of those who fought inside Namibia and to the government's duty to address the needs of all Namibians (see p. 113) resonated with feelings of widespread dissatisfaction among remainees who feel disadvantaged.

In an attempt to ease these tensions and quell ex-combatant demands by labelling them unreasonable, Swapo and government leaders quite correctly pointed

²⁰⁹ This is a half-humorous, half-derogatory reference to those who went into exile just shortly before Namibia's transition to independence and repatriation of exiles. When the exiles were repatriated, they received assistance packages that, among other things, contained a mattress.

²¹⁰ A reference to those who cooperated with the South African regime.

out that many kinds and groups of people contributed to and suffered during the liberation struggle, both in exile and inside Namibia. However, this line has not been consistently maintained since independence, something reflected in common perceptions. The current political elite largely consists of people with an exile background. Similarly, ex-combatants, especially those who were with Swapo in exile, have been singled out for particular benefits throughout previous reintegration programmes, particularly the Peace Project. Such preferential treatment was likely to lead to new demands from the ex-combatants, which is, in fact, what then happened. It was also likely to inspire sentiments of having been treated unfairly among the majority of Namibians who remained in the country during the war. It is less than surprising then, that instead of highlighting the contributions of exiles and remainees alike as a justification for not giving in to ex-combatant demands, the government finally promised compensation not only to ex-combatants but to other ‘veterans’ as well.

In sum, the arguments of the veterans’ committee and the reactions of politicians, the media and the public highlighted the radically boundary-making characteristics of ex-combatant policies by focusing on principles of entitlement. While the committee claimed that unique sacrifices were made by ex-combatants during the liberation struggle, Swapo and government representatives stressed the importance of the contributions also made, and suffering endured, by other groups than exiles. In both cases, references to the liberation struggle persisted – and actually seemed to grow in importance – and were linked with additional distinctions in the contemporary negotiation of citizenship.

THE SHIFTING GROUND OF INCLUSION

The above account indicates that the hold of liberationist interpretations on personal and national history, and associated relations of loyalty and obligation, are not uncontested and require constant maintenance. The negotiations over fair distribution of resources and opportunities on the basis of deciding who should be regarded as heroes, enacted during the compensation debate, had precursors in the ways in which the notion of ex-combatants had previously transformed, shifting the boundaries of inclusion in reintegration. As was briefly noted in Chapter 6, women

and youth with an exile background, and former SWATF and Koevoet fighters are notable groups in this respect. I now turn to their experiences and specifically their relationship with liberationist memory politics before dealing with the issue of the contentious remembrances of formerly exiled Swapo cadres and the ways in which reintegration and veteran policies have sought to manage them.

Women's experiences of the struggle and reintegration

In many ways, women's experiences of the struggle and of reintegration are distinct from those of men. As I noted above in Chapter 6, Namibian reintegration initially associated the concept of 'ex-combatant' primarily with those who had actually been in combat. In practice, this favoured men over women, as the division of labour in exile had been gender-specific – despite Swapo's assertions to the contrary – placing women predominantly in supportive roles and as students. Yet one of Swapo's stated objectives during the liberation struggle was to eradicate gender inequality. The movement claimed that, to further this end, it worked to facilitate equal participation of men and women in all spheres of the struggle, including the military (e.g. Swapo 1981: 262; cf. pp. 289, 292; Hishongwa 1983: 55-57; Katjavivi 1988: 91; Namakalu 2004). However, neither my own materials nor other non-partisan sources confirm that this actually happened.²¹¹

Many of the women whom I have interviewed had undergone military training, but this appears to have been the case with a considerably smaller proportion of exile women than of men, and when it came to performing military duties, the difference becomes more marked. Those women who mentioned having served at the front said that they either performed logistic work, transferring supplies

²¹¹ Swapo sought to address women's issues by establishing a women's council and programmes intended to increase their well-being and empowerment, with a number of exiled woman activists playing an important role in this (Hishongwa 1983: 53-4; Becker 1995: 154-170; Soiri 1996: 84; Akawa 2014: 49-57). However, women's liberation was predominantly seen as an adjunct of national liberation within the movement. Women's representation in Swapo's administration remained low, and one is tempted to conclude that the existence of the Swapo Women's Council was considered a sufficient gesture of recognition and the proper channel for women's influence; otherwise, power in the movement remained largely in male hands.

One should not forget the considerable changes and opportunities that exile introduced into women's lives, however. Many received education, learned skills and took care of tasks that were not traditionally considered their domain. However, such steps did not often survive the transition to independence (Gawanas 1993).

to the guerrillas, or worked as field nurses. Only a couple referred to themselves as ‘fighters’ or ‘combatants’, and even those who did so specified that they had served in roles such as auxiliary nurse or company secretary. Thus, it appears that even if both men and women underwent basic military training it was mostly men who actually waged war while women who served in the military seem to have very rarely taken part in actual combat.²¹² The majority lived elsewhere, mostly in Swapo’s civilian camps and in educational institutions in various countries (e.g. Becker 1995: 151-2, 163). Overall, women’s roles leaned towards the reproductive sphere of social activities much more than those of men and included taking care of children, nursing and teaching; women largely understood their participation in terms of the idiom of familiness and traditional reproductive roles.²¹³ Indeed, a perception that was occasionally expressed to me was that a woman becomes fully adult only when she has children: ‘Without children you are not really a woman,’ one said. It was also claimed that women could use pregnancy as a way to escape the front, as pregnant women were transferred to the civilian camps (see also Shikola 1998: 141-142).

Whether due to this specific history or to ongoing expectations of gendered behaviour and self-presentation, women’s ways of narrating their life also tended to differ from those of men. Most of the life stories of former exiles, men and women’s alike, are variants of the liberation narrative. However, while women’s stories manifest elements of belonging and commitment to the liberation struggle, they differ from the straightforward heroism and militancy of male narratives in several

²¹² In Soiri’s (1996: 76-77) view, women mainly worked in the military as nurses and, according to Preston (1997: 458), as radio officers, health assistants and caterers (see also Akawa 2014: 61-63; Becker 1995: 149-150). Groth (1995: 80) quotes a former woman exile who claims that Swapo used women ‘for military purposes’ in the mid-1970s but later stopped this. However, it is not specified what ‘military purposes’ means here. According to another former woman exile whom Groth quotes, ‘women...were fighting alongside the men’, though this woman apparently had not herself been in combat (ibid.: 97.) According to yet another former exile, she and many other ‘Namibian girls’ were trained but ‘weren’t right at the front and...didn’t fight’ (ibid.: 96-97). Shikola (1998) recounts having been ‘fighting at the front’, in the early 1980s. However, she also specifies that her ‘duties were to check that all the women were okay, that they had sanitary pads and soap. I used to travel from one base to another, and I also had to go back and forth to Luanda, to look for...supplies.’ She estimates that there were about two to four hundred women in the frontlines and claims that ‘[a]t the beginning, they were sending hundreds of women but later they decided not to send so many because the situation at the front was really bad’ (Shikola 1998: 141-142).

²¹³ Soiri (1996: 85-92) arrives at a similar conclusion. One can also find a parallel in Zimbabwe’s liberation war, in which the idiom of traditional ‘motherhood’ was used to rally the support of women (Staunton ed. 1990).

In my material, such idioms and roles were complemented by a more self-conscious and confident feminist discourse among the minority of women who received a high level of education.

respects. First, women usually cite other reasons for going into exile than the militant wish to get involved in the armed struggle so prominent in men's stories. These include hoping to advance their education in exile, running away from repressive conditions in occupied Namibia and leaving simply because so many others were doing so. Second, although the stories of most women are dominated by their belonging to the liberation movement, they tend to emphasize their efforts to sustain and reproduce the Namibian exile community rather than parading the militant heroism that dominates men's accounts. Third, women's stories allow more room for admissions of hesitation, sorrow, regret and guilt than men's stories, including being influenced by circumstances beyond their control instead of being driven by firm commitment – differences that are, however, far from absolute and are crosscut by significant variation in both men and women's accounts.²¹⁴

These distinctions can be illustrated by the examples of two women who managed to pursue education in exile and went on to build successful careers in Namibia after repatriation; both offered well-versed, eloquent accounts of their life histories.²¹⁵ Anna's story provides evidence that elements of militant heroism can also appear in women's stories, though often linked to an extended concept of the struggle incorporating activities other than direct combat participation: specifically the above-mentioned nursing, logistics or education. Like many others, Anna opens her story by presenting her childhood as a pristine, ideal order, speaking of the 'good old days' of traditional rural Ovambo and of happiness at home in the town where she grew up. This stands in stark contrast with the general conditions of apartheid, the theme to which she swiftly turns: 'Those were the days of apartheid of course...horrible times' when 'one lived in fear'. She introduces the theme of politics into her narrative by asserting that since she 'was a child there was always politics' and describing her father's political contacts. Like many others, she recounts having been more seriously exposed to political issues at secondary school: discussions with friends, Swapo's radio broadcasts from abroad, civil rights issues discussed by a teacher, and witnessing colonial injustice and violence gradually led

²¹⁴ For closer analyses, see Becker (2008: 285–290, 294–297); Metsola (2001: 64–96, 108–116, 124–129, 135–138, 213–219).

²¹⁵ I recorded these stories in 1993. It should be noted that the main differences between well-educated women's stories like the two described here and those of less-educated women did not concern the above three characteristics as much as how detailed the stories were and the degree to which they stressed individual agency and achievement. A more detailed analysis of these – and other – Namibian exile life histories can be found in Metsola (2001).

to her becoming involved in politics. Starting a Swapo youth branch in her hometown and campaigning to get her friends released from arrest resulted in strengthened political commitment. She goes on to describe the general strike of 1971-72, explicitly noting it as a turning point in both her personal history and in 'the history and the revolution in Namibia'. It is also the moment when she and her friends start to think about 'join[ing] the liberation struggle outside'.

A long and detailed narrative of going into exile then follows wherein Anna describes her deliberations on whether to leave or not, balancing the prevalent militant atmosphere among the youth against her attachment to her mother and children and her studies. She decides to leave and, like many others, does it secretly, without telling her family. After getting to Angola she joins a growing group of other recent Namibian exiles. The group then proceeds towards Zambia, first escorted by the Portuguese army and then on foot, until they suddenly encounter MPLA guerrillas who appear almost mythical characters, fierce-looking and frightening men of the bush, whose leader becomes a legendary figure for Anna and her companions. The guerrillas offer assistance and after a few more days the group finally reaches Swapo in Zambia.²¹⁶ After recounting her initial contact with Swapo in exile – involving an official with a beard and 'wild hair', and marking the irrevocable transition into the world of exile – a long and informed account follows of conflict between the militant newcomers and the moderate veterans over whether the newcomers would get to fight or not. The leaders want to send some of them to school but the newcomers will not consider it. As they are many, they expect a swift return to Namibia as fighters to liberate the country by armed force. According to Anna, the leaders were correct but it took the newcomers some time to understand this because they were immature and ignorant of how things worked in exile. The conflict with the leadership recurs once more when the newcomers are taken to the Old Farm settlement.

There they finally settle down to a more stable exile life of working hard, building and cultivating the land, and going to school in Lusaka in the evenings:²¹⁷ a tough but happy life of working together without quarrels. Even when Anna later moves to a Zambian college to complete her secondary education, 'the camp...was

²¹⁶ A similar narrative of meeting the MPLA can be found in Angula (1990: 87-90).

²¹⁷ The events Anna talks about are also described by Erastus Shamena (Shamena and Shamena 1980: 176-180).

always home' where the students returned on holidays. There is a transformation of commitment from the newcomers' impatient militancy to working towards better care of the exiles' needs through rational organization and building new housing, schools, hospitals, clinics, kindergartens and maternity wards. The construction of the new settlement of Nyango emerges as a prime example of this committed effort, with the energetic Libertine Amathila, the woman who rose highest in Swapo's exile organization, in the lead. Almost everyone contributes willingly and political education is instrumental in this change of attitude. The young militants are instructed on 'the history of Swapo, what they are doing, what actually is happening, and what they expect from us'. Anna also mentions how living in independent Zambia, going to school there and studying history made her understand 'the development, economical side' of independence whereas she had earlier only thought of chasing 'the Boers' out of the country. In this way, militancy is transformed into a more mature form of commitment, into working as a Swapo cadre and, as she puts it, as a 'mother' on the educational front and the 'homefront' of Swapo's civilian settlements.

From Nyango, Anna leaves to study nursing in Europe, apparently a fruitful period as she has the opportunity to campaign for Swapo and to acquaint herself with the situation in Europe. Her commitment grows stronger, unlike that of some others who do not want to go back to the camps in Angola and Zambia, and continues after Anna returns from her studies, this time to Kwanza Sul. She is surprised at how big and yet well organized the settlement is. The conditions are demanding but with dedicated hard work, day and night, everything can be handled. Anna even takes care of her friend's baby while working at the same time. She sums up: 'I loved [the work]...It was your people, you felt at home, you were doing something worthwhile, participating in the struggle.' Social life, like having parties, attending weddings or meeting Angolans in the vicinity, is mentioned only briefly. The narrative of working hard and trying to take care of the exiles as well as possible, of a demanding but happy life, recurs again when Anna talks about her life in Lubango where she moves from Kwanza Sul to work in the maternity ward. For the last few years in exile Anna lives and works in Lusaka and Luanda. Her narrative of this period is a relatively brief description of events: working, getting married and having a baby.

Return to Namibia in 1989 appears as a significant and emotional event. It is recounted vividly, and details the fear and tension of the transition period and her emotional reunion with her family. She concludes that the election victory was ‘one of the greatest moments’ in her life, a reward for the hard work of the years before. The motif of commitment to a collective mission recurs once more after independence when Anna speaks about the need to make ‘independence a reality to each and every Namibian’ through a ‘development programme’, and asserts that she is willing to contribute to this task. However, things have also changed during her absence from the country. Her old home has disappeared and she no longer has anything in common with old friends.

In contrast, Maria offers a critical, non-heroic take on events. The emphasis of her story lies on her educational career instead of her participation in the liberation struggle. She first mentions briefly when and where she was born, where she attended school, when she left Namibia, and what she did during her first years in exile. Then comes the turning point: the start of her educational career in exile. Here, her narrative gets more detailed and the rest of it is taken up by the description of her academic career, until she ends her story with her return to Namibia. In our ensuing discussion, going to school in Namibia constitutes the first major phase of her narrated life, after which going into exile initiates the next phase in her story. Listing the reasons why she left Namibia, Maria is explicit in rejecting liberationism. She begins by wondering whether she can still actually remember the reasons and motivations that led to her leaving and then goes on to say that her decision was not politically motivated and that she only left because she wanted to have a better education and because so many others had done the same. Interestingly, she acknowledges the predominance of the liberation narrative by referring to ‘people who are always telling’ that they went into exile to fight for national liberation and explaining that she ‘cannot hide’ the reason why she left, implying that perhaps she should. She also stresses her ignorance at the time about conditions in exile and says that the decision was not a result of careful consideration. The contrast to liberationist stories continues when she describes her experiences in exile as her narrative is not one charting a heroic journey but rather one of drifting from one misfortune to another. After crossing the border, she and her companions are captured by UNITA, an experience that she describes as ‘terrible’ and ‘frustrating’. When she finally finds her way to Swapo, she receives guerrilla training in ‘terrible’

and 'awful' conditions, 'regrett[ing] very seriously' that she had left Namibia. She then joins the combatants. This is yet another misfortune, as she turns down an opportunity to study because of her immaturity and ignorance, believing that she could return to Namibia sooner by joining the military. Instead, she spends several years in a confused war situation 'in the bush' with insufficient food and other necessities.

Thus, going into exile is a major turning point just as it is in liberationist stories. However, it is a negative rather than a positive one. Maria's narrative of arriving among her fellow exiles does not conform to the collective heroism of the liberation struggle: the picture she draws of Swapo's military training and operations at this time is not flattering, if not explicitly critical, and her account of Swapo's relations with civilians and UNITA are instructive in this regard. At the fore is confusion, personal suffering and regret, and her contempt for the authoritarianism of the military. She also mentions that sometimes there were abuses of power. The only good thing is the political morale, which ensures comradeship; without it everything would have collapsed. Overall, however, she argues that military life was, for her, a 'vacuum life' in which her personality was not developed but destroyed. She was rescued from this destruction only when she got the opportunity to study, thereby connecting her present self to something that was there before her involvement in the military: the 'original Maria'.

Considering the totality of the military as an institution (Goffman 1961; see also Foucault 1975), it is not surprising that such radical reinterpretations occur. Maria talks of having had difficulties in both first learning the military way of life and later 'un-learning' the discipline that had been instilled in her. She admits having accepted interpretations that she no longer values and that now, in light of her perceptions of military practices and social relations, and claims of personality change, appear to be the result of brainwashing. Against the background of such a re-evaluation of life in the military, her move into education comprises the main turning point in her story and the fulfillment of what she 'really wanted from the beginning'. The narrative of her educational advancement and of the contrasts between military and civilian life as well as between life in Africa and in Europe constitutes the third major phase in her story. Her return to Namibia is the culmination of her narration. Her happiness in coming home after sixteen years of

absence is mixed with observations of changes that make her sorry, such as the high rate of migration and the transformation of values.

Ultimately, in contrast with liberationist life stories, Maria's narrative is not set in motion by the establishment of a heroic mission that she sets out to accomplish. Rather, she drifts into exile almost accidentally, although she also mentions having hoped to get a better education, a desire that is interrupted by her long spell in the military. Through ignorance and bad luck, Maria has to undergo various ordeals in exile, from which she is only rescued by finally getting the opportunity to study. This is also a story of gradually achieving an objective but, unlike liberationist stories, its focus is not on ascending in the service of a collective purpose. Rather, it is a story of neutralizing a loss, reclaiming her 'original self' through gaining knowledge and experience in the course of educating herself. In terms of the classic analysis of narrative structure and its 'actantial' positions (Propp 1968; Greimas 1987a, 1987b), her story constructs its subject as a victim instead of a hero. Instead of glorifying 'the struggle', her story – and those of some other women – conveys a sense of surviving through it. Instead of setting out on a heroic quest on her own initiative, the subject is thrown from one place or situation to another by forces not under her own control. Obviously, the narrative portrayal of agency in life stories may relate to the real circumstances of their tellers' lives and the fact that there are differences in the extent to which people actually have power over deciding their life courses. Yet, in the stories I was told, even the men who were not great achievers by conventional standards tended to cast their lives in the heroic mould, a model that stems from both nationalist and gender mythology, while the women appeared to be more often torn between portrayals of commitment and victimhood.

Women's sexuality is a particular issue that has formed a pervasive subtext in accounts of the liberation struggle and life in exile. On the one hand, this is evident in stories that reveal male fears concerning women and their sexuality and, on the other, it appears in occasional accounts of sexual abuse. In exile, persistent rumours circulated of women who were recruited by South Africans to sleep with Swapo notables with razor blades inserted in their vaginas. I heard this from many of my interviewees, who tended to be men. For example, one of them said that

there were women [who] went abroad and had something in their vagina, something like a blade...It was put in...[so] if you sleep with that woman, the blades will cut you...I saw it myself...happen to two people...Now they are dead...because we had a clinic but...those

people were just trained there to [give first aid]...The hospital was far...To get to Lubango was very far.

Williams (2009: 132-3) was also told similar stories and notes that Swapo officials cultivated them as part of their anti-spy propaganda in the exile camps. Clearly, the constant danger and mistrust inherent in a war situation provides a perfect springboard for such tales and there is no doubt that fears of spies intent on destruction were not restricted to female targets – men were also rumoured to have been sent by South Africans to spy on Swapo with instruments of communication hidden inside their bodies, for instance, or in radios and watches.²¹⁸ However, the particular form taken by rumours concerning women, and their reiteration by men, are clear indications of their symbolic significance and the tensions associated with women and with sexual relations in the exile situation, irrespective of factual merit.²¹⁹

Such stories seem to be a mirror image of women's accounts of sexual abuse in exile as some of my research participants told me that commanders of the training camps sometimes abused young women.²²⁰ Hilma was one of them. Born in the late 1960s, she only went into exile as a secondary school student in 1988. In her story, she describes how she had been 'politically hypnotized by the fighters coming inside the country' during secondary school and then decided to go into exile together with a few of her age cohort. She received military training in Angola before being transferred to Nyango for some brief schooling before returning to Namibia in 1989. In her narrative of the problems of exile life, she notes an element of sexual harassment:

²¹⁸ See for example how Peach describes exile problems on p. 231.

²¹⁹ Interestingly, this is a variant of an old 'vagina dentata' folklore motif. One comparable setting where it circulated was among American soldiers during the Vietnam War (Gulzow and Mitchell 1980). To complicate matters, devices capable of transforming such legends into reality have been invented. For example, the United States Patent and Trademark Office has registered multiple patents for 'anti-rape devices' and related instruments (<http://www.uspto.gov/patft/index.html>; accessed April 27th 2014). An 'anti-rape condom' was publicized in South Africa in 2005 (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-rape_device).

²²⁰ Akawa (2014: 131-146) and Leys and Saul (1995a: 60, note 32) refer to such problems and they are also an established part of the dissident narrative of the history of the liberation struggle, included for example in Shipanga (1989: 103-104), Nathanael (2002) and Groth (1995: 97) who quotes an exile officer trying 'to protect the young girls when they were harassed by their male comrades'. Magdalena Shamena tells of doing the same (Shamena and Shamena 1980: 174). Shikola (1998: 143), also a former exile, talks of less direct forms of pressure.

When it came to eating in the camps, you were not going to eat [until you are] full...And the people working at the storerooms, distributing things, you could see...[that] they were angry. When the people came from the battlefield, the PLAN fighters...to the camps, they wanted to have some sexual activities with the younger people who were coming from Namibia. That was a big problem.

It is impossible to establish the prevalence of sexual abuse or pressure in exile due to the sensitivity of the issue and a lack of reliable quantitative indicators. On the basis of the anecdotal evidence recounted to others and myself it certainly occurred, but the extent is uncertain. At the same time, many women stressed that life in exile had been good, even better than in Namibia after their return, because of the material security and closeness of social relations in the 'health and education centres'. However, accounts of abuse remain significant as an issue of contention that challenges the polished, heroic accounts of the liberation struggle.

In sum, with national liberation being primarily celebrated as a military victory, the imagery of ex-combatants as liberation heroes remains predominantly masculine and does not offer a clear-cut identity model for women. It is not as easy for women to resort to the self-portrayal of heroic militancy that dominates men's stories and the genre of nationalist historical and autobiographical literature. However, women's particular history during the war and their gender-specific ways of remembering the struggle did not dilute their sense of entitlement; they have always been active participants in the demonstrations staged by ex-combatants. Some of the government and Swapo officials who had dealt with ex-combatant demands even remarked to me how clever it was of the ex-combatants to have a visible contingent of mothers with their babies in the demonstrations to attract public sympathy.

One of the women described the demonstrations in the following way:

We were fighting to get employment. I was part of the big demonstration that was held in the whole Ovamboland in 1998...We were always having regular meetings and gatherings...We were disappointed that we were in the struggle, liberated this country, then some colleagues got employment and we didn't, so why [was that]?...We thought that once the President comes to us and hears from us he will understand and help us. When we were walking, people started joining, asking why until now we don't have any job...This demonstration came from the Omusati region and went...to Ondangwa...It was going on for seven months... We wanted to talk to the President but we only found a Minister. I can't remember the Minister's name, maybe he was from Home Affairs. He informed us to be patient, employment will be created. He explained that the government is small and does not have enough money...After that demonstration the people realized that we are urgently in need of work.

Through such pressure, women managed to benefit from reintegration *en masse*, as the Peace Project extended the circle of inclusion from ‘ex-combatants’ to other ‘ex-freedom fighters’. However, as with narrative models for organizing remembrance, the patterns of female employment have tended to differ from those of men. As I noted above (see pp. 109-110), employment in the uniformed services has favoured men over women while women have tended to receive various civilian jobs. Furthermore, those women who were in uniformed services did not apparently serve in frontline duties in the remote rural areas. For example, as already noted, the only woman working at Pine’s base did not reside there but came to work from her home nearby. Other women research participants who had been employed in the police force were stationed in towns, living in their own apartments, which meant that they did not share all the experiences associated with frontline police work. As I demonstrated in Chapter 7, such experiences came together in a masculine work culture that could have considerable emotional significance for many former exile men employed in the SFF.

Rauna was one of the women who had been employed in the police through reintegration. Like some other women, she described her life in a way that stressed its difficulties, for example in negotiating the demands of motherhood on a meagre income. She talks of having left Namibia when very young without properly understanding what she was doing. In exile, she went to school and lived in the civilian camps, recalling this as a happy time despite material shortages:

I was born here in the North...In 1977 I went to exile, I was ten years old... It was just like a dream...I just heard that some of my friends went to Angola, to Zambia...to seek Kenneth Kaunda and President Sam Nujoma...I also wanted to see the presidents...Apartheid...was not even known to me...Only when I saw some people beaten, I realized that we are threatened...I decided to go to my friends to discuss whether they wanted to go to exile...There were adult people...who decided [that] we go...I cannot even remember what my intention was...[Only] after [some time], maybe...after Kassinga was attacked I came to realize that, ‘Oh, we are under colonial [rule]’...[and] we are [going] to fight for our country’...They transferred me to [a camp] where I started my primary school...After Kassinga was attacked...we were taken to Cahama...We spent there a few months. Then they took us to Kwanza Sul...We stayed there for maybe...three or four years...The situation [in Angola] was not so...good, because we were in the bush. Epecially the food, and the conditions...Sometimes we get the food, eat, some of the days we [go] without getting food. But our managers, they were so capable, looking after the kids. They would...take the children so that they can get their food first, before the adults. And we were just enjoying because there were no threats and we were just treated the same, equal...Then again they took us to Zambia, where we went to start our secondary school...at Nyango...[Later] they sent us to Congo-Brazzaville...[to] a vocational school...We were learning a lot of things, until the...election of Namibia...We were given the repatriation form to come to Namibia for elections. Then...we won, our government won.

Her account of life in Namibia after return reads like a succession of hardships. These include having to drop out of school because of poverty, being abused by employers, not earning enough to support herself and her family properly even after she had received her police employment, and getting sick. Her story offers a glimpse into the background from which later ex-combatant demands for monetary compensation arose. There is a striking contrast between her expectations and the realities of life after repatriation wherein she contrasts her poverty and problems with the continuing privilege and affluence of those who were privileged before independence. Her story clearly conveys the sense that having been in exile 'fighting for the country' is thought to grant one certain rights and entitlements that Swapo is obliged to fulfil.

Even after being provided a job, the impression of deservedness does not disappear, as 'the salary is too small' and, therefore, the returnees should be given money and land. At the same time, this is difficult to realize because of democracy and reconciliation:

[After return] it was difficult, because the people you knew before were just like strangers. Their behaviour did not correspond to our behaviour...[so] when you met some of the people...you've grown up with, it was so difficult to discuss with them...And you could not even know who belongs to Swapo and who does not... We were just afraid of each other...Up to now we are just like that. Only because of the reconciliation...there is no way again to say those things...[but] that's in our mind, you know each other, that this one is a South African soldier, and this one is a Swapo soldier...I didn't complete my secondary school...because my name was not called again...I stayed at my mother's house until I decided to go to search for a job in Windhoek, because there was no way to survive...That was 1991... Then I went back to the North...and gave birth to my firstborn. Then I went back to Windhoek to search for a job again...You just woke up in the morning, then went to town...to look for a job...standing the whole day there, without eating...It was causing some of the people to get sick or mental problems, seeing that 'oh, I was in exile, fighting and now I'm still struggling, without eating, no place to stay, no school', and some of the people there, especially the women, they had a lot of kids...but the women don't even get the food to feed the kids or money to pay school fees...I went to work at the home of one white person from South Africa...The treatment...was not good...Some of the Mondays I received my salary, but some Mondays I didn't. And my salary...was [small]...I went to Walvis Bay...and started to work at the [factory]...The conditions [were better]...I worked there for two years.

When we [former exiles] tried to go to Swapo office, we were many. Swapo could not manage at the same time to take the whole group...They could just say that you may come back next week, because...they understood your problem, they are going to see how the President is going to solve your problem. Then you went back, just to hear whether you are going to be called again...Under reconciliation, you have to take the school kids, or [other]...people...And when [we we]re fighting, [we we]re not fighting just for Swapo, [we we]re fighting for the country, the people of Namibia...for the economy... Around 1995...the government [realized that] most of the people who came from exile are suffering. Then this National Planning Commission took a decision...that people who came

from exile must be registered, so that...they can get a job...And most of the people got a job now...[But] there are some people still...from exile...not having a job...And [you] cannot even discuss it with them, because...it's too painful...I was in Walvis Bay, it's where I got registered...at the Swapo office...I joined the police force in 1997...I was on my duty, in the [factory] and I heard that in town people are registered to join the police. I just dropped the knife [laughs]...and ran to town...After a few days I heard my name was called...I completed my training the same year. Then I started my job at Otjiwarongo...I asked for a transfer because I got sick...to come to work in the North, where am I now...It is okay because I have a job and I'm receiving some money to help my children, but...the salary is too small...It is not enough to solve all the problems of my family...especially to pay for the school fees...I'm the only one in the family who's working in a good job... I [provide for] my sisters, my mother's sisters and my three children, and my husband is not even working...Our government or our party forgot...one thing...They just [decided] that we must accept reconciliation, but...for that, they were supposed to give something to the people who were in exile...money or land to stay. Up to now, the land is still not in our hands, just still in the Boers' hands...The black people, we do not even survive...just using small [pieces of] land. Those who colonized us, they still have the land...and they are still rich. But we are still struggling. The salary [is so small that] you cannot even benefit from it, just to eat.

While Rauna was one of the many women who had received ex-combatant employment and yet were not entirely satisfied, not all registered ex-combatants and former exiles would receive any employment or other benefits at all, for various reasons. For example, let us return to experiences of Hilma whom I introduced above. After repatriation, Hilma continued her schooling. In 1991, becoming a mother interrupted her studies. After that she worked for a relative, then as a salesperson and secretary at a local company, then in a security company, and then in a shop again. At the time of my fieldwork she was a small-scale vendor, selling soft drinks and beer at the Oshakati open market. She had registered as an ex-combatant but was still waiting to be employed. With her relatively good education and work history and with running her own business, she was not desperate for any job that she might be offered. Instead, she was trying to use her ex-combatant status to gain access to work in the uniformed services, preferably in the army or as a game warden. Apparently, she had been called up to join the police but failed in screening because of having been convicted for buying stolen goods. This did not prevent her from plaguing the General Manager of SIPE with constant phone calls telling him what she wants, 'but they just tell me to wait'. She had participated in ex-combatant demonstrations and mentioned meetings organized by SIPE for registered ex-combatants not yet employed to inform them of their prospects and possibly to prevent further unrest on their part.

The formerly exiled women's experiences described here indicate some of the reasons why, and the ways in which, the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion

have shifted in Namibian ex-combatant policy. Due to the unconventional nature of the war and the irregular, variable life courses of the exiles, it has not been not easy to make a strict demarcation between combatants and non-combatants. In exile, Swapo members also had very limited control over their fates: whatever the movement assigned to them they had to perform. Hence, they were perhaps justified in feeling that responsibility for their consequent life courses did not rest solely with them as individuals, but with their exile leaders too. This was something that they did not hide; on the contrary, those who had initially been left out of reintegration and public employment applied constant pressure on the Swapo government until their concerns were addressed and a decision made to include former exiles irrespective of whether they had been fighters or not, making it possible for women to benefit to much greater degree than before. Such redefinitions of the concept of ex-combatant, incomplete coverage of reintegration benefits and dissatisfaction with salary and other circumstances even after jobs had been provided opened the door for further demands and problems of demarcation, as will become clear in the case of former youth exiles.

Youth – unemployment and existential anxiety

The young former exiles were a notable group to come forward with demands that tested the limits of beneficiary categories during the Peace Project and since then. Generally, their protests and demands have not garnered much public support, unlike those of older ex-combatants.²²¹ It has been repeatedly argued that this category of former exile faces the same problems as other young or unemployed people in Namibia, and has the same opportunities to advance in life as those who grew up in the country. This may have played a part in the government's decision, during the Peace Project, to exclude young people born after 1974 as well as those who only went into exile briefly in 1988 or 1989, as it would have been difficult to justify preferential treatment for formerly exiled youths over other young people or the non-returnee unemployed. A development planner in the National Planning Commission closely involved in the administration of the Peace Project explained: "The Cabinet...realized that we were going into uncharted territory...creating an

²²¹ However, later ex-combatant pressure for compensation met with less public approval.

open-ended situation, because...anybody who had gone in exile up to 1989 would just come and expect to participate.”²²² The Minister for Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation, Nahas Angula, specified:

Every young Namibian has to find [their] own way of getting integrated in the society. If [there is] a problem, it has nothing to do with...[re]integration...If you give in then you create a situation which you will never solve because every youth, every person who feels that he is marginalized will say ‘no, I have to come up with something also’.²²³

Despite such setbacks, the hopes of young people to become beneficiaries were not shattered. While the official response to youth demonstrations indicated they did not quite have the muscle or public support required to get their way, the earlier play with official definitions and practical eligibility criteria created a grey area so that they could try to bend the rules in their favour and wrestle access to benefits. The following two cases illustrate this arbitrary and shifting ground between inclusion and exclusion. Martha was born in 1974 near Oshikango. She went into exile in 1988 and continued her schooling in Kwanza Sul until 1990. After returning to Namibia, she went to school in the north until she reached Grade 12. Since then, she had been living at the family farm, was unemployed and had a one-year-old daughter. She had taken part in ex-combatant demonstrations and had registered herself, but was later told by officials that her registration had been a mistake and that she was too young to be entitled to ex-combatant status. During my fieldwork in 2003, she received temporary employment at a construction site near her home. Nakale was born in 1974 in the Omusati region. After going into exile in 1987, he attended school in Kwanza Sul until 1991. After returning to Namibia he continued his schooling and matriculated in 1997. Following registration, he was employed in the security forces in 2000. We have here two people with similar backgrounds but different outcomes in terms of ‘reintegration’. This kind of indeterminacy ensured that the feeling of entitlement, based on having been in exile, remained alive. Nearly all the formerly exiled youth I spoke with, men and women alike, would have appreciated government employment or other forms of assistance and felt that if their parents were entitled to these benefits, they should be too. They justified this expectation mainly by arguing that they had lost time and opportunities by moving

²²² Michael Kafidi, interview with author, 4 August 2003.

²²³ Interview with author, 4 November 2002.

between countries and education systems and because they had to readjust to life in Namibia. Many of them had registered or tried to register as ex-combatants.

It is not possible here to give an exhaustive account of the multiplicity of the life situations of formerly exiled youths and their experience of 'reintegration'. Instead, I highlight a few significant features through a more detailed exposition of the history, current situation and ambitions of one of them, Alex. Alex was born in Angola in 1979 and lived there until he was sent to school in Eastern Europe for a few years after his father died. After his return in 1991, he first went to school in the central part of the country; upon moving to Ovamboland in 1993, he found difficulty in adjusting but gradually slipped into the local lifestyle. Because his father had died in exile, he was granted official war orphan status and his schooling was supported by SIPE until he failed in Grade 10, not an uncommon occurrence in Namibia, particularly in remote areas. Since then, he had been staying at the family homestead, unemployed. During my stay in the field in 2003, he got a job at one of the big warehouses in Oshikango but as the work was tough and repetitive and did not earn him much, he kept dreaming of something better. Still, the job clearly did him good as he seemed less desperate and complained less about his situation.

Alex's mother had been employed at the local government offices after taking part in the big ex-combatant demonstrations of 1997-98. She supplemented her income by buying *mahangu*²²⁴ from Angola in big bags and reselling it in smaller amounts at a roadside market in Namibia. Alex did not get on very well with his stepfather and said that this was why he was not staying in his mother's household but with his mother's sister. His mother was having a small house built for him nearby and he said that he would soon like to move so that he would not have to contribute so much of his income to his aunt's household. Now that he had a job, his mother also had expectations of him: 'I'm the firstborn so if I got a job I have to help my brothers, because they are still young, they are still going to school...If you have many poor relatives, you will stay poor yourself.' On the other hand, his aunt was not happy as his full-time job left him much less time to work on the farm and in the household. He appreciated his mother's help but complained about the schism between his mother and his aunt over who should be supporting him and what they should get from him in return. Such experiences of problematic

²²⁴ Pearl millet, a staple food in northern Namibia.

relations with family were not uncommon. Apart from orphans, many others who had been children in exile were also living away from their parents, who might have been assigned to duties in other places: at independence, it was not always easy to be reunited with family members, sometimes after years of separation. Many talked about feeling mistreated in various ways either by their caretakers in exile or by family members after their return to Namibia.

Alex was an active football player in the local team. He lived near the football field and went to practice almost every evening. 'I'm now a soccer player, but as you know, soccer this side [in the north] does not [earn you] any income, I'm just playing for the purpose of not thinking too much, so that I won't steal,' he explained. His football connections also helped him get his job, as it was arranged by Tommy, a teammate who held a senior position in the same warehouse. According to Tommy, Alex was 'always asking for ten dollars', so it was better to give him a chance to earn the money himself. Alex was a keen follower of English football and Western popular culture and we often ended up sitting in one of the local bars watching TV together and chatting. Apart from being common concerns with Namibian youth, in his case these interests also reflected a longing for 'Europe'. He sometimes talked about friends who had married Europeans and returned with their spouses to live in Europe and he thought that another way of attaining his ambition would be to play football there. However, his references to 'Europe' were more representative of an abstract dream of a better life than an expression of concrete attachment to European ways, more a negation of the very local everyday problems that surrounded him. Life in Namibia was difficult, he said, as there was no work, friends from exile were spread around the big country, there was too much violence and people were too reckless in their sexual behaviour. 'Europe' signified economic security but also modernity and style – concerns that were also central for many of his friends, who were carefully trying to fashion themselves according to hip hop-based street wisdom within the limits of their means.²²⁵

In part, Alex's problems were economic as his insufficient and precarious income made the necessary steps to adulthood more difficult. He was insecure about his relationship with his girlfriend as he acutely felt that he could not give her

²²⁵ See also Fairweather (2006) and Behrend (2002) on the importance of style as a youthful way to produce and express identity.

enough her in material terms and her family did not accept him. 'If I become a family man, I can't support her, I can't support my family because I don't have any work,²²⁶ but...there I can get a job...It's only in Europe you can get money easily.' There were also other problems. At one point, Alex was arrested for a couple of days, accused of stealing a companion's mobile phone in a crowded bar. He was clearly dispirited by the issue and his friendship with the accuser had been severed. Luckily, the case was closed after investigation without consequences for Alex and his friendship with his companion was restored. On another occasion, he ended up in a fight with a young man who had picked on Alex on the street, calling him a gangster. Events such as these added to his desire to move away from his small hometown.

While his dreams of Europe might distinguish Alex from formerly exiled youngsters who never got further than Angola and Zambia, he was by no means removed from local realities and social relations. While he had many former exile friends, he interacted with everybody with equal ease and had been 're-Namibianized' to such a degree that some non-returnees were surprised to hear he had been in exile. Furthermore, over time the distinction, quite evident after the repatriation of exiles, between exile kids who had lived in Swapo settlements and those who had spent years studying in other countries²²⁷ had become increasingly blurred and partly replaced by other distinctions, though there were also some young former exiles who crafted clearer distinctions through their manner of speech, dress and lifestyle. These distinctions were clearly enmeshed with class position, however, and associated with educational achievement, family wealth and urban residence. It seemed to me that the production of distinction was also partly dependent on such resources, as its consumptive requirements would be difficult to fulfil without them.

After failing Grade 10, Alex had registered with SIPE for employment in 2000, but was still waiting to get a job:

They said if you fail grade ten or you fail grade twelve they will...give you jobs from like NDF or in Nampol...but [it's] now three years [since] they promised that...Always at the end of the year, they used to come here and make meetings with us...We tell them our problems but they say we have to wait. We'll wait until you get old...I don't even have

²²⁶ This was said before he was employed.

²²⁷ These included most notably two larger groups of Namibian youth educated in Cuba and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). For a case study on the 'GDR kids', see Kenna (1999).

his²²⁸ phone [number]...Here in Ovamboland it is difficult...not like [for] those who are in Windhoek.²²⁹

In a bid to get a job in the army, Alex was also trying to enlist the support of Shikongo, a high government official who used to be his father's friend and had also been his mother's partner in exile after his father's death. Shikongo invited him to Windhoek and Alex agreed with his teammate Tommy that he could go back to work at the warehouse if Windhoek failed him, a decision that was made easier by his troubles in his hometown. His teammates did not like his departure but as one of them said to me: 'It is for his own good,' so they understood. I met Alex for the last time at a Windhoek petrol station shortly before my return to Finland. He had found his way to Shikongo, who had welcomed him warmly, and he had stayed with him for a few days, but Alex felt that Shikongo's wife and daughters were annoyed. He said that he could not stay long in Windhoek but was hopeful that Shikongo could arrange something as he had promised to try to use his connections. Six months later I heard that Alex was back in the north, still without a job.

It is by no means surprising that young former exiles try to negotiate themselves into the circle of beneficiaries of ex-combatant schemes. As distant as they might seem to be from the core definition of ex-combatant, the inflation of the concept to cover all needy former exiles brought them to the threshold of inclusion, with only the arbitrary line of birth before 1974 or after dividing the eligible from the ineligible. It probably did not make much sense to young people born in, say, 1974 or 1975, to see that others from a similar background but a year or two older were included while they were not. This interpretation was further enhanced by knowing that this demarcation has not been consistently followed and that in many cases their parents or friends benefited from the schemes even though they had never concretely fought in the war.

However, although Alex and many other youngsters were trying to use their exile past and their connections to gain benefits, their approach to ex-combatant reintegration was more practical than that of many older former exiles. Alex did not

²²⁸ Alex is referring to the General Manager of SIPE.

²²⁹ During my visits to the SIPE head office, I saw youngsters hanging around in the reception. The receptionist confirmed that they had come to ask for jobs. She further told me that it was common for young people, mostly with an exile background, to come for that purpose. It was apparently this kind of persistent pressure to keep one's case alive that Alex thought would be easier to apply in Windhoek than from the north.

have a strong emotional tie to Swapo.²³⁰ On the contrary, he was quite critical of its practices of rule in exile and considered the current political elite self-interested and corrupt.²³¹ One night, while we were making the rounds of Oshikango bars, he suddenly told me that ‘most of these ministers killed a lot of people in Angola’, a reference to Swapo’s arrests and mishandling of its members in exile in the 1980s (see above, p. 88). When I took this issue up with him later, he said that even he himself was briefly suspected and threatened in Angola, even though he was just a child, because he spent a lot of time with the Angolans ‘in the bush’. He also talked of how ‘PLAN thugs’ used to bully schoolboys in the settlements into joining the army instead of going to school, sometimes taking boys with them by force.

Indeed, for youths like Alex the prospect of government employment through reintegration policies was merely one possible future among others. Thus, he also talked admiringly about an Angolan friend who had made a fortune in diamond deals. The friend had a luxurious house and five cars in Lunda Norte, and lived a flashy life with lots of women and drink. He had invited Alex to visit him for a few days the previous year and Alex was fascinated by the lavish lifestyle he had seen. Yet not everything his friend did commanded his respect and admiration. He spoke disapprovingly of his friend’s debauchery and said that he had warned him that he would catch AIDS if he continued ‘fucking around’ the way he did: ‘These Angolans don’t know about condoms.’ However, he added, if the friend came again he would leave his work without hesitation and go with him. Still, Alex and other young people know that grandiose dreams are not easily fulfilled, and are quite prepared to take government employment if the opportunity arises – even if it requires giving up one’s youthful style, as in the case of one of Alex’s friends, who had to cut off his dreadlocks when he joined the police.

²³⁰ The same can be said of most youths I interacted with. They clearly tended to have a more pragmatic and less emotionally laden relation to the liberation narrative than the older generation. This obviously does not rule out the possibility of a ‘struggle kid’ identity acquiring increasing emotional significance with time and institutional entrenchment, as seems to have happened since then.

²³¹ Similar sentiments about politics and especially the current political elite were shared by many of his ‘exile kid’ friends, as well as other young Namibians. It was also quite common for the young to express criticism towards the liberation narrative and its public expressions, either through open contempt of what they saw as its empty pomposity or by turning it into a source of jokes and parodic mimicry.

Ultimately, Alex is an example of the many unemployed young Namibians lingering between childhood and adult life.²³² For the formerly exiled youth, this is heightened by the perceived contrasts between the habits and conditions of exile and those in Namibia. This anxiety is apparent in Alex's search for any way to get ahead, be it government employment, professional football, other employment or hustling. He was tired of waiting in limbo, yet lacked the financial independence to make the transition to adulthood. The themes of blocked social mobility and associated anxiety, distinction vis-à-vis the older generation and the political elite, and the crossing of boundaries between 'state' and 'non-state' domains that emerge here are also familiar in other African contexts, despite the fluidity of the concept of 'youth' and the variety of different situations on the continent.²³³ There is a mismatch between actual possibilities and expectations, heightened by relatively high educational levels and imageries of modernity.

It is an indeterminacy that easily leads to identifying the young as a problem. They are said to be in danger of getting lost to unemployment, alcoholism, HIV/AIDS and severed social ties. There is also a constant worry that they will turn to crime.²³⁴ While this discourse is driven by elite security concerns and operates relatively independently of actual crime rates, the imaginaries of success and style associated with a 'thug' lifestyle do appeal to many youngsters, particularly young men. Interestingly, such aspirations can coincide with a readiness to utilize state resources if and when they are available. In Namibia, unlike, for instance, in West African post-conflict situations (Fithen and Richards 2005; Vigh 2006: 105-112; Utas 2005; Olonisakin and Alao 2005; Fitz-Gerald 2005), state-provided livelihoods often do represent a viable option. At the same time, the selectivity of state inclusion helps maintain the appeal of informal, even illicit livelihoods that have a long history in Namibia owing to the starkly exclusionary character of the state during the colonial era.

²³² For a general account of the challenges faced by Namibian youth, see Mufune (2002).

²³³ Abbink (2005); de Boeck and Honwana (2005); Fumanti (2007); Vigh (2006: 89-104); see also Liechty (2003) on youth construction of middle-class modernity in Kathmandu.

²³⁴ See for example Isaacs (2007); Hengari (2007); 'Let's Get AIDS Wise, Urges the President', *The Namibian* 22 August 2007; 'Youth Unemployment a Big Problem: Angula', *The Namibian* 2 July 2007; 'Youngsters of Today Have Some MPs Tugging at Their Grey Hairs', *The Namibian* 23 February 2007.

The administrative perspective on the youth question appears different from that of ex-combatants. Youth is a diverse category and not a strategically positioned interest group like Swapo ex-combatants. At the same time, the problems of young people are of a different magnitude, as they are not restricted to former exiles. It would be difficult to justify differential treatment of exile and non-exile youth and impossible to provide government employment for all of them. While the extreme of widespread youth alienation is certainly undesirable, the other extreme of their militarization as ‘patriots’ – like the quasi-military schemes such as NYSS as well as their self-mobilization as ‘struggle kids’ appear to be doing – does not seem to offer a satisfactory solution either.

To conclude, as suggested at the beginning of this chapter, it appears that the success of various potential ex-combatant or veteran groups in tapping into the stream of recognition and benefits depends on how successfully they are able to portray themselves as both a security threat and as heroes of the nation. Like ripples from a stone thrown into still water, the long negotiation of loyalty and benefits between former exiles and Swapo leadership has extended in gradually widening circles of inclusion. At first the concept of ‘ex-combatant’ was primarily taken to mean those who had actually been in combat – those conventionally most directly associated with both a potential for disruption and with a history of heroic sacrifice. This favoured men over women. However, as women became as vocal as men in demanding recognition during ex-combatant demonstrations in the 1990s, and as the actual history of life in exile was somewhat ambiguous in terms of ‘heroism’, the concept of ex-combatant was broadened to include all those who had been assigned to various duties by Swapo in exile, and thousands of former exile women were registered and employed.

After women, the sphere of inclusion has widened to cover formerly exiled youth. While earlier stages of reintegration for the most part excluded those born after 1974, the persistence of the ‘struggle kids’ has earned them increasing recognition. In this way, a more inclusive notion of ‘heroes’, with the potential to accommodate people across status, gender and age divides, has gradually evolved. The Veterans Act promised to cover ‘all patriotic Namibians’ who participated in the struggle, whether in exile or inside Namibia, representing the next step in the blending of new demands into the category of ‘ex-combatant.’ The criteria of inclusion have become more varied and increasingly dependent on being able to

craft a plausible narrative of participation in the liberation struggle. At the same time, the contrast between this circle of heroes and those it shuts out is gaining heightened significance. In this way, while the war is left further back in time, its history and the identities attached to it are continually, perhaps increasingly, important in determining access to recognition and benefits. And as the other side of potentially extended sphere of inclusion, there is also firmer exclusion of certain groups and remembrances.

WHAT DOES NOT FIT INTO THE LIBERATION NARRATIVE?

‘Makakunya’ – the ex-SWATF and Koevoet between reconciliation and patriotism

‘Freedom fighters are not mercenaries and this clearly distinguished Swapo Plan ex-combatants from the South West Africa Territorial Force and Koevoet.’

‘The Swapo Party Government has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all Namibians, irrespective of colour, race, ethnic origin and political affiliation.’²³⁵

At the time when the Peace Project commenced, reintegration of ex-combatants was justified by framing them as a threat to the security of the state and society, as well as by referring to a proportion of them, those who served with Swapo, as national heroes. This led to the employment of thousands of ex-PLAN fighters and former exiles in the public sector, especially in the uniformed services. However, reintegration has not proceeded similarly for their former opponents, the members of SWATF and Koevoet. As I noted above (see pp. 104-109) they were incorporated into the security organs of the newly independent state as well as ex-combatant training and employment schemes but not nearly to the same degree as their former exile counterparts. Later, when veteran legislation was passed, they were completely excluded.

There are several likely reasons for this difference. First, while the image of ex-combatants as a security threat applied to Swapo ex-combatants and former

²³⁵ Excerpts from the speech by Sam Nujoma quoted above on pp. 112-113. The word ‘makakunya’ mentioned in the heading is a derogatory term used to refer to those who fought on the South African side during the independence war.

SWATF and Koevoet alike, the two groups were perhaps not equally worrying to the political elite. The demonstrations by Swapo ex-combatants were large-scale and enjoyed considerable popular support, unlike those of ex-SWATF and Koevoet. Second, as former exiles are a key Swapo constituency, there was a perceived need to try to maintain their loyalty. Third, former exiles did not merely demonstrate vis-à-vis abstract state structures, but contrasted their lot with that of their now well-off erstwhile comrades. They sometimes backed their demands by direct threats to power holders. Last but not least, such strategic political considerations and binding ties of loyalty and reward between formerly exiled members of the liberation movement are anchored in the liberationist version of history that I outlined above. This narrative counterposes Swapo's ex-combatants, or as Nujoma put it in his speech, 'progressive Namibians', against the former SWATF and Koevoet. As, for example, the official commemoration of the liberation struggle at the Heroes' Acre attests, recent history is often portrayed in pronouncedly militarist tones, with Swapo fighters occupying a central role in this portrayal as heroes prepared to sacrifice life and limb for the nation's freedom. In this reading of history, the SWATF and Koevoet fighters, by contrast, cannot be seen as anything but traitors or mercenaries, as Nujoma's speech put it, as they fought on the wrong side despite being Namibians. They are an anomaly in the strictly dualist liberation narrative between colonial oppression and a unified nation rising against that oppression. This picture simplifies the complicated reality of Namibian pre-independence politics and society, forcing its relations and contradictions into the dual imagery of 'us' and 'them'.

The former SWATF and Koevoet fighters I met were torn between feeling that such a complicated history explains and justifies their military involvement and the pressure to rewrite that history in accordance with the dominant version of liberationist history in order to be accepted as full citizens. They tended to recount that they have been discriminated against in job provision by the government, both during ex-combatant registrations and thereafter. Some had registered as former fighters but had not been called up;²³⁶ some had been recruited into the uniformed

²³⁶ A similar case emerges from a letter from the 'Committee of Ex Combatants in Caprivi Region', a group of ex-SWATF fighters, to the Prime Minister, dated 16 October 1999. Its writers complain that while all ex-PLAN combatants have been employed by the government, they have not because they are ex-SWATF, even though they have registered many times. 'If you don't want us to work in your

services but had faced discrimination and resigned. Most spoke of having been unemployed most of the time since independence. In contrast with the mutual sympathy between former exiles and reintegration officials, based on their long shared history, some former SWATF and Koevoet told of the informal ways by which they were made to feel out of place and inferior, such as making them queue without being attended to while former exiles were dealt with immediately, or being addressed in a hostile and derogatory manner by officials. Many also complained of their exclusion from the veterans' pension scheme. To be sure, these problems represented actual instances of discrimination, but they also arose out of a fear among former SWATF and Koevoet that coming out into the open could lead to negative consequences. Some said they would not register because they distrusted the intentions of the Swapo government. Some of the officials I spoke to also referred to this problem when I enquired about the low number of registered SWATF and Koevoet fighters.

On occasions when I observed people from the previously opposed forces meeting, there was no visible hostility. However, they tended to favour the company of their own kind. There were also indications of remaining tensions bubbling under the surface. As Simeon, a friend who had not himself participated in the war on either side, explained:

[When] we are talking about ex-combatants, basically we are talking [about] people who have been fighting each other...These wounds [have] not healed in their hearts...They have been silenced by...national reconciliation...They are still thinking of revenge...[When] we are sitting for instance with Isack²³⁷...or my brother even...you hear that...‘these people must...be thankful to the government. If that national reconciliation was not there you should have seen’...Isack for instance...lost his eye...one of his legs is crippled, you heard what Mandume²³⁸ said, ‘this...mark here is the bullet from first April’.²³⁹ When he went into exile he [did] not have such a mark. The spirit...of revenge will be there...but there is no other alternative [than] just forget.²⁴⁰

army or police you can give us even the civilian jobs...because this your army of Namibia is not a national army...but only for the ex-PLAN.’

²³⁷ A former PLAN combatant.

²³⁸ Another former PLAN combatant; see pp. 169, 196-197.

²³⁹ A reference to the battles of April 1989 when Namibia's transition to independence was supposed to start but large numbers of Swapo combatants suddenly appeared inside Namibia and licence was given to South African forces to hunt them down.

²⁴⁰ See also what Rauna says on pp. 211-213.

On one occasion, I was interviewing a police reservist in the company of a few SFF members, all former exiles. Inspired by the reminiscences of life in exile, they started to sing liberation songs. A colleague of theirs, a former Koevoet, quietly left the scene. Later when I was discussing the issue of SWATF and Koevoet members with Pine, he explained that they prefer to avoid public exposure of their past: 'If someone knows that his mother is a witch, he won't talk about it.' On another occasion, I happened to be sitting with Laurence, a former SWATF 101 Battalion soldier when three former PLAN combatants entered the house. We embarked on a long discussion, with the three ex-combatants vividly recalling their wartime exploits, while Laurence hardly said a word, clearly wanting to avoid indicating his own involvement in the war.

Overall, it was clear that many former SWATF and Koevoet were not keen to have public exposure of this aspect of their past. It was obviously familiar to their families and others close to them, but they did not make it generally known. There are experiences of real reconciliation within families and communities, and it is also a significant part of the rhetoric of national unity that proscribes open hostilities, but this goes only so far. The antagonism that separates 'patriots' from 'collaborators' and 'traitors' is constantly reiterated in the public imagination, reproducing the pariah status of former SWATF and Koevoet in public discourse. However, there is variation between communities in this regard; it is clearly different to be a former SWATF or Koevoet member in the Damara neighbourhood of Katutura, for example, than in Ovamboland. In the former, this was a relatively common and well-known aspect of community history, whereas in the latter it was considered much more exceptional and abnormal (see also Colletta et al. 1996: 188-192).

Against this background, it is hardly surprising that former SWATF and Koevoet members did not usually portray themselves as military heroes or even draw attention to that part of their pasts. They tended to explain military service as something forced on them, either directly by being drafted or out of economic necessity. They longed for recognition and acceptance, and many would have appreciated government employment. 'We even voted for them [Swapo] in the first elections,' commented Jacob and his friends in the Damara neighbourhood of Katutura, recalling their optimistic expectations and readiness to be part of the new nation at the time of independence. However, they were now deeply sceptical that they would ever be incorporated, on account of political considerations.

Furthermore, non-Ovambo former SWATF members easily see their discrimination as not just politically but also ethnically based. For example, Frederick, a former SWATF member with a Damara background, explained that the Ovambos, particularly former exiles, only seemed to favour each other, and that this could be seen in reintegration too.

Opposed to the dominant view that depicted them as pariahs and to the heroic self-portrayal of most former exiles, the former SWATF and Koevoet fighters presented themselves as victims. First the colonial power had dragged them into the army and prevented them from advancing in education or work, and then the Swapo government had refused to look into their situation while adding insult to injury by labelling them traitors and collaborators. This dual marginalization is evident in the case of Andreas. An Oshiwambo-speaking townsman from south of the Red Line,²⁴¹ he received his conscription papers in 1980, soon after finishing his schooling. He managed to evade the service until 1982 when he was forcibly fetched; he then deserted but was caught, jailed and later sent to the 101 Battalion. He was wounded in 1985 and resigned in 1986. After a few years of job hunting and stints of casual work, he applied to the new national army in 1990 and was accepted. He served at Grootfontein, but soon ran into problems with his formerly exiled superior. After further intimidation and an 'accident' that befell a former SWATF colleague, he resigned in 1992. Some refused to bow to circumstances and assumed an angry stance towards the current government, which they saw as deeply partial; some claimed that they would not even accept a government job if it were offered. For example, a former SWATF soldier from the same Katutura neighbourhood as my assistant responded angrily when we approached him in a market. Referring to the former exile in the next stall, he said, 'I was in SWATF and I'm proud of it. Why don't you ask this terrorist?' Despite the pressures, not all are prepared to give in and rewrite their history, but this is not easy as the former SWATF/ Koevoet members do not have a generally accepted and respectable self-representation to draw upon for self-esteem and bargaining power.

In sum, apart from enabling links between Swapo and its former exile cadres, the liberation narrative also serves to exclude people and remembrances. In contrast with the privileged position of former exiles, the reintegration experience of the ex-

²⁴¹ The Red Line is a veterinary cordon that used to serve as the border between the 'police zone' of white residential and farming areas and the northern reserves or 'homelands'.

SWATF and Koevoet fighters is one of partial inclusion and greater exclusion. The former has been driven by the policy of reconciliation and the associated responsibility of the government to 'promote the welfare of all Namibians, irrespective of colour, race, ethnic origin and political affiliation', as Nujoma said, as well as by the concerns about the potential threat posed by ex-combatants of both sides. Undoubtedly there are many influential and ordinary Namibians who genuinely believe in reconciliation. Yet such official neutrality is compromised by the dominant narrative of the history of the nation, which continues to legitimate the exclusion of apartheid South Africa's allies as well as those considered to be their heirs and current 'imperialists'. Furthermore, the binary imagery of the struggle is often linked to other distinctions, such as race and ethnicity. In the current political setting, reconciliation often appears to be viewed as necessary to the degree it prevents open conflict, but it does not extend to genuinely overcoming past differences. This would be possible only by re-evaluating the notion of 'liberation' and its position as the founding myth of the nation.

Swapo's internal memory politics

Apart from the 'anomaly' of former SWATF and Koevoet, the image of a nation united under Swapo's vanguard is contested by remembrance of problems and divisions within the liberation movement. The issue of Swapo's numerous internal conflicts has most directly challenged the liberation narrative. Namibia's way of dealing with this, and other aspects of its traumatic past, differs crucially from neighbouring South Africa, where a Truth and Reconciliation Commission publicly dealt with human rights violations committed during apartheid in an attempt to facilitate reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 1998; Krog 1999). In Namibia, a policy of national reconciliation was adopted but interpreted rather differently. Instead of facilitating open, public treatment of the past, reconciliation has been understood as mutual forgiveness and 'moving on' without opening old wounds.²⁴² However, the detainee issue cannot be wished away. It continues to be discussed in private and also crops up repeatedly in public discourse. A number of detainees and Swapo dissidents have turned personal accounts into testimonies to

²⁴² For more detailed analysis, see Conway (2003); Dobell (1997); Saul and Leys (2003a, 2003b).

correct historical and moral wrongs and re-establish their innocence and worth in the eyes of fellow Namibians.

The version of history that emerges from these accounts mirrors the liberation narrative, offering an inverted image of it whereby Swapo is transformed from the collective agent of liberation into a totalitarian monster that has devoured its own members and poses a threat to democracy and freedom.²⁴³ These stories tend to follow the liberationist plot at first, with a short description of happy childhood, gradual politicization and leaving into exile to fight for freedom. However, this storyline is disrupted by the narrator's arrest or other revelatory incidents that lead to disillusionment with Swapo whereas former exiles who have remained loyal to Swapo barely refer to conflicts, inequality and abuse within the movement in exile in their stories. On the one hand, this may represent a demonstration of loyalty to the party and, perhaps, a fear of departing from the line taken by its leadership; on the other, such remembrances would be difficult to reconcile with a heroic narrative of liberation: they would go against the coherence of such an account and are therefore harder to include than aspects of exile life that validate the storyteller's status as a participant in the heroic process of national liberation. In contrast, detentions, and Swapo's other internal problems, have become the key events in dissident narratives, revealing the movement's true nature. Thus, these narrators are vocal about such problems even when they describe periods *before* their troubles with the movement started, extending the causes and signs of this rupture in their personal history far back in time and elevating conflict, inequality and abuse to a major role in the history of the liberation struggle. Ultimately, however, while revisionist versions are as polished and crafted for public consumption and political purpose as the published liberationist accounts, they have not fundamentally shaken the liberation narrative, as the dissidents are easily labelled as unpatriotic troublemakers or puppets of the former South African regime and current imperialist forces.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ For a more detailed account, see Metsola (2001: 201-211).

²⁴⁴ The Veterans' Ministry did promise that the ex-detainees would be eligible for veteran status if they had not actually been infiltrators but had been, as Minister Tjiriange put it, 'caught in the crossfire'. This was a euphemistic admission that Swapo detained some people without good reason ('Swapo Lubango dungeon victims also war veterans', *The Namibian*, 13 August 2009). The Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement, an ex-detainee organization, soon countered that recognition of ex-detainees as veterans would not be sufficient and reiterated their call for a public apology from Swapo ('Veteran status not enough for ex-detainees', *The Namibian* 17 August 2009).

More worrying to Swapo are indications of critical remembrances emerging from its core constituency of ex-combatants that mention such issues as disappearances and maltreatment within Swapo; abductions of young people into exile that counter the claims made by Nujoma and other party leaders that participation in the struggle was voluntary; and unfulfilled material promises made to the exiles, again explicitly contradicting Nujoma's statements (see pp. 112-113). In my field material, such recollections mostly surfaced in fragments from young, urban-based former exiles and those not employed through reintegration programmes.

My discussion of the SFF in the preceding chapter and women and youth in this has touched on a concern evident in ex-combatant reintegration but also of fundamental importance to the construction and maintenance of power and authority: the capturing of populations by institutional arrangements that are conducive to producing compliant subjectivities. Apart from the immediate aim of dispersing the demonstrations, Namibian ex-combatant policies have been motivated by a fear that ex-combatant agency would become subversive. Job provision for the ex-combatants, for example, was designed to redirect their agency in ways that would not contest the political regime and could even be useful to it. From this perspective, those who deliberately avoid ex-combatant programmes become particularly interesting. Numerous potential beneficiaries did not register or take up the employment offered to them. Many of these were involved in different forms of self-employment, ranging from small-scale production and trade in agricultural products, beverages and food, or services such as carpentry and bricklaying, to activities considered criminal in the eyes of the state, such as smuggling or buying and selling stolen goods. Sometimes these livelihoods seemed to be preferred because of their benefits in terms of money, comfort and family arrangements. However, for some, reintegration was too deeply immersed in troubled political histories and too heavily loaded with expectations of discipline and loyalty to be appealing. For such veterans, self-employment appeared to offer a sphere of freedom and autonomy compared to the low-paid, hierarchically commanded jobs offered to ex-combatants. I now turn to more closely examining those avoiding state capture through the cases of a number of childhood friends from the same neighbourhood.

Peach and Manu were Ovambo-speaking streetwise men in their thirties from Katutura who had not registered themselves or sought ex-combatant employment.

Peach went into exile in the mid-1980s as a schoolboy, first attending school and then undergoing military training in Angola. At the time of my fieldwork in 2003, he ran a shebeen and made trips to South Africa where he bought goods that he then sold in Namibia. He also had connections with former SWATF/Koevoet fighters who were residing in South Africa, a link that had initially grown through family members in the early 1990s. His lifestyle was closely connected with events of the past. To him, ex-combatant programmes with their attendant regimentation and dependent way of life were not appealing. Referring to disappearances and the heavy discipline in exile and empty promises at independence, he spoke of having learned enough about Swapo in exile to avoid getting captured by ‘politics’ anymore:

I don't today believe in Swapo...not in Boers, nobody...I believe only in myself. I just work hard for my children...Doing my business as you know, I'm on my own...Don't tell me politics, [I'm] no longer interested...Politics is a dead game...gambling with other people's lives...They can steal your heart, to make you feel strong...but everything [they] said was a lie...There was a promise [of] free housing, that we are gonna have a free beautiful house in town...[and] free education...We were not supposed...to pay for the hospital. Not even water, not to pay house rent...There won't be hard things, everything's just gonna be easy like that...There's many things which happened there...There are people who schooled with me, till now they are lost. They never came back... [Like one] man...we used to play soccer together...That man, he never...was in the army... [Swapo told] us that...if you miss your friend, he's somewhere in...Russia, Cuba...Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, studying...Today everybody says he's been fighting for the country...If they can make a truth commission like in South Africa it's much better...We could claim our brothers, those who passed away.

He pointed out a few men sitting across the yard and remarked that they had been involved in ‘security’, questioning people in exile: ‘He's one of the hard believers...You can ask him, he won't tell you the truth.’²⁴⁵

Manu had not been in exile. Instead, he had run away from Windhoek to avoid being captured by the police and joined the SWATF in Ovamboland as a way to make money and wait for things to cool down. Although he managed to avoid the authorities back then, he had later accumulated a criminal record. He explained how he currently made a living: ‘If you are not working, you have many challenges. So...if somebody stole something, then I can buy from him and resell it to make a profit.’ He had previously been involved in larger scale operations and enjoyed a more flamboyant lifestyle but after a few stints in jail, he now seemed to be keeping

²⁴⁵ The fact that it was not a problem for Peach to talk in sight of these men is an indication that people have faith that there are now limits to the power of the party and its functionaries, at least in the urban, ethnically and politically diverse environment of Katutura. However, such freedom is not unrestricted; cf. Barney's reference to not wanting to say the ‘wrong things’ below.

a lower profile. Like Peach, he sneered at the prospect of applying for low-paid, regimented ex-combatant jobs.

Many in the neighbourhood circle of friends to which Peach and Manu belonged were involved in the thriving Katutura shadow economy that reaches across the borders into South Africa and Angola.²⁴⁶ They were mostly in their thirties and drawn from both sides of the war. Their trade was dependent on a network of informal connections, including strategic relations with state representatives in which the official aspirations of state power do not appear as a reference for identification. Rather, state agents represent a potentially hostile force to be reckoned with by tactics of avoidance or cooption. Without glorifying this way of life, it should not be taken to reflect an amoral position either. The distant relationship to the 'liberation struggle' of people such as Peach, and their disillusioned and sceptical view of the projects of the ruling party and the state arises from a long history of predatory state power, from particular personal histories, including exile experiences, and from longstanding neighbourhood solidarities.

Some of those involved in this lifestyle were now trying to find more stable and less risky ways of making a living. Freddy and Kamati had previously operated in the same gang with Manu but had recently tried to enter into more mainstream occupations and were struggling in temporary employment. Freddy had also been employed in the Special Field Force for some time. Peach's friend Johnny had spent most of his childhood in exile and completed high school in the north in the late 1990s. He had come to Windhoek to search for work but, finding none, he had become involved in the illegal diamond trade. He was, however, constantly looking for a 'real,' officially accepted job.

Some young men from the neighbourhood had been employed in the police through the Peace Project. In this way, reintegration placed people who had grown together and shared similar life histories on different sides of the law. However, this division was far from absolute, as the cases of Pine and Peter illustrate. Pine already knew the tricks of the street when he left for exile in the early 1980s and he resumed a life of hustling and petty crime after repatriation; it was only later that he registered as an ex-combatant and became an SFF police officer in the north (see

²⁴⁶ According to Grobler (2003) and Goba (2003), the most important goods that cross these borders illegally are diamonds, vehicles, drugs and guns. Involvement in diamond smuggling allegedly extends to people in the highest echelons of politics and society (Grobler 2003: 25-32). See also Nordstrom 2004a: 229-230.

Chapter 7). His life story is thus an example of multiple movements over the boundaries of legality over time. In the case of Peter, this boundary was constantly blurred in the present, as he was balancing between the demands of his job and expectations rooted in his old social network. After going to school both in Windhoek and in the north, Peter went into exile in the mid-1980s and joined the PLAN. After repatriation, he struggled for a few years without permanent employment and took part in one of the early ex-combatant demonstrations, taking up employment in the police after being registered as an ex-combatant. He served in the SFF ‘in the bush’ for some time, but did not like it, and managed to get a transfer to other duties in Windhoek.²⁴⁷

Unlike Pine, who manifested extreme loyalty to the government, the ruling party and President Nujoma, Peter never portrayed himself as a Swapo loyalist. In his case, the job in the police seemed more like a practical survival strategy than an existentially significant attachment. Like Peach, he was also vocal on disappearances and other problems in exile:

[One] guy had...[an] expensive watch...They say [the] watch had communication with back here...at home²⁴⁸...Till now, nobody knows where is he. Nobody held a funeral...Innocent people, man, I can say, because the person grew up with me...He was never a DTA, he was not opposing Swapo...There were many things man...[People were] just disappearing like nobody’s business. You just went to the bush to [relieve] yourself. Then you lost your way back... because maybe it is raining...Then you are out. Can you imagine?...The guy lost his way...[and] went somewhere...where he was not supposed to be. It’s over with him, till today. So we were not feeling nice. See? Because...if you say anything, then you go also. You see? You can’t complain. You can complain in your heart but you can’t complain in public...Okay, it was struggle...but something was not right...You can’t stay for five days without food. Five days, but the superiors, they are eating, full time...[And] the store room is full of food. They say we can’t eat like the country is independent. So we have to wait the country to be independent, then we can eat (laughter)...If you’d go there to the superior and say ‘no, why are you eating, we are not eating?’, my friend...we will miss you, so you have to to tighten up your belt and...keep quiet and wait for the food...When we came back in eighty-nine...So we had to go and drop the weapons...uniforms and get civilian clothes...Eat well, goats are slaughtered...People are eating...every day...they must be well when they come home.

Peter lived on the same street as Manu and surely knew of his dealings. He also mentioned another neighbour’s diamond deals, yet business went on as usual. According to Manu, ‘the police understand...because we are all from the same

²⁴⁷ His townsman identity and the importance of associated ideas of modernity and style were also evident in how he laughed upon hearing that Pine – whom he knew – had acquired the habit of drinking toambo, home-brewed beer, in the north.

²⁴⁸ In other words, the watch was suspected to be a spying device.

background...If they recover the items they just have to take the[m] back to the owner', but they would not arrest him. Peter was also quite prepared to use his position within the state framework to lubricate not entirely transparent deals. In such cases, the line between legitimate and illegitimate livelihoods is thin and can be crossed situationally due to divided loyalties and trying to make ends meet. At the same time, he had also made enemies as he had had to make arrests in the neighbourhood, which was why he always carried a gun. It was perhaps because of such contradictions that he hoped to be able to give up his police employment for some other job in the future.

Peach, Peter and Pine came from the same township background. Yet they had adopted different survival strategies and therefore different relations with state power in general and reintegration in particular. Pine had become a fiercely loyal SFF policeman, a frontline manifestation of state sovereignty. In contrast, Peach was in the opposite position, having grown disillusioned with Swapo and politics in general he sought to maintain his distance from the state. Peter tried to straddle the two extremes, making strategic use of his ex-combatant status without giving strong allegiance to the current government, while trying to maintain and use his neighbourhood relationships for his own ends at the same time. Such neighbourhood and peer solidarities stretched far back to the time when the colonial state was clearly perceived as the enemy. For various reasons, such as problematic events in exile and the perceived self-serving tendencies of the elite, the current state was in some ways seen as a continuation of that history. Local loyalties often crossed both pre-independence enmities and current boundaries of legality. This might be seen as an instance of grassroots reconciliation but perhaps not of the kind that the government would prefer.

To the neighbourhood 'brothers' discussed here, the legality or illegality of their various livelihoods was not a highly significant distinction, apart from an instrumental sense of having to protect oneself from the unwanted attentions of the law. They consider what they are doing to be licit,²⁴⁹ a conviction that arises from the need to make a living in a situation of meagre opportunities (see also Roitman 2004, 2007). As one person from the same neighbourhood told me:

²⁴⁹ In the sense of being socially, even if not legally, accepted. See Abraham and van Schendel (2005) for a useful discussion of the distinctions between legal, illegal, licit and illicit.

I grew up in a very rough suburb where the mafias are...the *botsotsos*, [they are] my neighbours, even my brothers...But what can you do?...How could you report this gentleman to the police if this gentleman is the one bringing bread into your home. You would be stupid to report; then you wouldn't eat.

Yet, these people do not operate from a position where state power is insignificant or merely external. Rather, their personal histories show a multitude of varying engagements with the state, and their current stance towards it is informed both by these personal histories and by the fact that some of their current livelihoods are officially classified as unlawful (which does not mean that they are not economically significant or clandestinely tolerated). It largely seemed, however, that reintegration could not capture their interest, as its ways of constructing the link between the state and reintegrees did not resonate with their ambitions and sense of self. On the other hand, while they might contest state sovereignty in their remembrances, their current stated relations to the state and their deeds, such contestations remain partial and fragmented and are not likely to form any systematic political resistance.

Unlike Peter and Peach, Barney, another former exile from the same neighbourhood who had also served in the Special Field Force but resigned, was more reserved at first. He said that the big shots in the party know what can be said, but ordinary guys like him might end up mentioning things that the leaders want to keep secret. 'We just don't want to disappear in the night,' added his wife. This shows that the hierarchical discipline of wartime still reverberates in the present, giving rise to careful consideration of what to say, and when and to whom to say it. Similarly, Petrus, a friend of a friend, referred to how the older generation of former exiles had been indoctrinated to keep silent about certain things, while Peter referred to the 'hard believers' who would not disclose controversial details of the time in exile. Eventually Barney told me of similar occurrences as Peter and Peach, and these were also discussed informally with many of the people in the same neighbourhood.

These examples demonstrate that people can now speak more freely than in exile but that this freedom has its informal limits: critical or counter-remembrances mostly do not appear as public statements but as fragments, whispers and murmurs in bars or around kitchen tables and fireplaces. To a degree, this might be the result of fear but there is more to the matter. Some are more prepared to voice negative recollections than others, a position that often accompanies a distanced or even

critical relation to Swapo, party politics and ex-combatant public employment. Those who do not share the ‘hard belief’ of loyal Swapo cadres have often refused to be reintegrated to the same degree and have also refused to forget or keep quiet about controversial issues of the past. Conversely, those who have remained more loyal in their remembrances have also been more eager to seek ex-combatant employment, and receiving a job or other benefits raises the stakes when representing the past. The liberation narrative thus provides a framework for narrating one’s experiences but also restrains the way in which they can be narrated: not only a frame for remembering and voicing memories but also for forgetting and silencing (see Becker, 2008: 282–4). Its heroic ethos supplies a purpose for the suffering and sacrifices of the struggle and defines a community with which one can identify, but does not offer sufficient tools for dealing with traumatic experiences (see also Shigwedha 2011, esp. p. 202).

Yet recollections that do not enter the arena of public remembrance do not cease to exist, can reappear in fragmentary verbal expressions or in symptoms such as the compulsive use of alcohol, and might play a role in motivating persistent ex-combatant appeals for recognition. As testified by references to physical injuries made by some demonstrators, references to the horrors of violence in war by some of my research participants, or Alex Kamwi’s dramatic statement of ‘dying’ by joining the struggle in exile (see p. 116), many ex-combatants grapple with experiences that do not easily fit into the heroism of the liberation narrative. For example, Isack was in his 40s and had left Namibia in the mid-1970s. Having been injured in the war, he had worked at the Swapo office after repatriation until he received a job in a ministry through ex-combatant registration. In a similar way to Pine, he first recounted his past according to the heroic storyline, but this gradually broke down, giving way to admissions of horror and suffering; these were not, however, formulated into a coherent narrative, but rather appeared as occasional outbursts of painful memories, usually over a glass of beer. Moreover, despite carrying his traumatic memories physically in the form of permanent disabilities, he was nostalgic about the Swapo civilian settlements that had been his home since being injured: life there had been easy compared to now, he said. Another ex-combatant, Kapolo, also used to be a policeman, but had lost his job because of drinking; the effects of his long-term alcohol consumption were clearly visible. Yet he was again on the waiting list for a government job. He was by no means an

exceptional case, though perhaps an extreme one: Pine was a heavy drinker and so were many of his colleagues; Isack was a heavy drinker, as was Peter and many others not mentioned here. Indeed, I was often told that former exiles 'like to drink too much'. Given the circumstances of people like Kapolo, it would appear that reintegration has been seeking primarily economic solutions to problems that might not be purely economic. Thus the 'undisciplined behaviour, drunkardness and absenteeism'²⁵⁰ of some ex-combatants should not be dismissed without acknowledging the possibility that such problems might have something to do with their war experiences, which then raises tricky questions of responsibility. This is also reflected in the ways in which demonstrating ex-combatants have repeatedly referred to their suffering, sacrifice and entitlements in terms that stress broader recognition beyond mere economic need.

CONCLUSION: THE AFTERLIFE OF LIBERATION

Memory politics remain of continuing importance in Namibian postcolonial reality. Historical events are seen as relevant to current socio-political relations and used to legitimate or contest them and to define terms of inclusion and exclusion; they are, therefore, fundamentally important for the granting of entitlements. In the unfolding of Namibian ex-combatant reintegration, the actors involved have appropriated and contested the country's violent past for their own ends. The portrayal of Swapo ex-combatants as military heroes in the liberation narrative has been a central aspect backing their claims for benefits and recognition that aligns with their attempted containment by the Swapo government. This frame has both set limits on how Swapo ex-combatants and other former exiles can publicly remember their past and the struggle, and marginalized those who fought on the South African side. At the same time, this dominant version of history is more or less systematically contested by an array of alternative remembrances that include the historical accounts of former Swapo members who were detained by Swapo in exile as alleged spies or left the movement due to other internal problems. Drawing on similar resources, former SWATF and Koevoet members also question Swapo's monopolization of the moral

²⁵⁰ 'Nujoma lashes out at divisive forces', *Die Republikein*, 26 July 2006.

high ground in terms of how the nation's history is remembered and their own stigmatization in particular.

In promoting their demands, non-dissident ex-combatants have stressed their role in the liberation struggle and their continuing loyalty to Swapo. However, if their concerns have not been addressed, they have also been prepared to air contentious remembrances in public and contrast their own plight with the leaders' current affluence, and such criticism has considerable wider resonance. The crucial point to consider is how such memories come to be interpreted – and what kinds of political identity and agency they then motivate: whether they become an element in the stories of dedicated patriots choosing to commit themselves to the struggle despite hardships, or, instead, produce more subversive narratives. Such concerns partly explain Swapo's recurring willingness to recognize its former exile cadres. Certainly reintegration connects with controlling the direct potential threat posed by the ex-combatants and ensuring their loyalty, but it is also a broader issue related to how Namibia's recent history, and Swapo's role in it, is to be remembered. While the problematic aspects of the 'struggle' are relatively well known in general terms, public remembrance by ex-combatants is to be guarded more carefully than that of the dissidents who have been most vocal on these issues so far. First, much of what I have discussed above is known in outline but not in great detail. If large numbers of ex-combatants and former exiles systematically start relating their recollections on these issues, considerable detail would become common knowledge, potentially threatening the current position of particular leaders. Second, as Swapo's legitimacy is largely built on the history of liberation, conflict with its prime heroes, the veterans, would easily erode it – all the more so if numerous ex-combatants and former exiles were to recount problematic aspects of 'the struggle', thereby revising the history of liberation. Due to the central role they have played, it would be hard to brand their recollections as unpatriotic. In this regard, they are potentially more dangerous to the party than the relatively small group of detainees and other dissidents, and it poses a more serious threat to the current regime than their capacity for violence that, as I demonstrated in Chapter 7, can be channelled in ways that the regime finds useful. It is this that sets Swapo veterans apart from other ex-combatants and will always provide the incentive to allow them to cash in on their recounted heroism and sacrifice: their recognition ties them more closely to Swapo's version of liberation, limiting the likelihood of their publicly sharing negative

memories. Interpretations of the past and of current socio-political standing through recognition and material benefits go hand in hand. Struggle history ties the current political elite and Swapo veterans closely together, giving the latter licence to make demands and the former a language to articulate ideal citizenship. At the same time, Swapo's ability to control remembrances of the liberation struggle partly depends on granting favours to the veterans or, rather, those who can convincingly make a case of being understood as veterans.

Hence, the continuing importance of ex-combatants turned veterans is by no means surprising. The central position that Swapo ex-combatants hold in the dominant nationalist narrative of Namibian history is potent in giving existential meaning to their lives. However, it is also potent in crafting a position of privileged citizenship via employment and other benefits achieved through reintegration. As long as this historical remembrance is as powerful as it is now, it is bound to serve as a resource for renewed demands, as the history of Namibian reintegration amply demonstrates. What is at issue, then, is not primarily the importance of the liberation narrative, but rather how the circle of beneficiaries is to be demarcated. The relationship to ex-combatant reintegration of the various groups discussed in this chapter varies, both between the groups and over time; indeed, the very definition of 'ex-combatant' has been a contested category given its key role in access to recognition and material benefits. Male ex-PLAN combatants have always been at the core of the concept and therefore also the prime beneficiaries of reintegration programmes, while the groups discussed in this chapter have had a much more ambiguous relationship to reintegration. Theirs is a history of partial inclusions and exclusions, based on both official and unofficial delimitations of eligibility which have been drawn in popular discourse, in policymaking and implementation of reintegration, and in work relations: both for political reasons, as in the case of former SWATF and Koevoet, and in order to avoid inflating the concept and bloating the base of potential beneficiaries, as in the case of youth.

However, in a significant departure from a narrow definition of 'ex-combatant,' an official decision was made to include not only those former exiles who participated in combat but also all other formerly exiled Swapo members. This was a response to pressure from demonstrating ex-combatants, who included a considerable number of non-PLAN returnees. In a situation of scarce resources and hampered upward mobility, however, fulfilling particular demands easily opens

doors to renewed claims, either by the people who have already been favoured (as in the case of the demands for compensation) or by previously excluded groups who feel that their situation closely resembles that of those included. Consequently, the apparently circumscribed operation of reintegrating ex-combatants opens onto the broader field of Namibian politics, involving arguments over inclusion and exclusion in political society and the national economy. During the compensation debate, both the ex-combatants and the Swapo government tried to ally themselves with a broader societal base. The ex-combatants referred to their struggle and sacrifices, and to broken promises for a better life, alluding to a widely shared sentiment that the elite has benefited at the expense of the person in the street. In contrast, the leaders argued that the ex-combatants are unrealistically trying to benefit at the expense of other, similarly needy people. Ultimately, the division between the elite and the rank-and-file has been intersected by that between returnees and remainees, while references to the value of the contributions of those who fought inside Namibia have appealed to the widespread dissatisfaction of non-exiles who have felt disadvantaged. By focusing on the needs of the ex-combatants versus those of others, the latter rhetoric has served to turn attention away from the discrepancy between the elite and the less advantaged.²⁵¹

The decision to extend the concept of veteran to ‘all patriotic Namibians’ who participated in the liberation struggle, whether in exile or inside Namibia, was a radical move that opens possibilities for yet further groups to ground claims in the historical narrative of liberation. It thus heightens rather than diminishes the significance of struggle history in current politics of power, citizenship and entitlement, with various new interests rallying under the increasingly vague ‘veteran’ banner. This enduring significance of the liberation struggle and its veterans is reflected in the ways in which the categories of ‘ex-combatant’ and

²⁵¹ This situation has interesting comparisons with Zimbabwe. While the Zimbabwean veterans are commonly seen to be working in cahoots with the regime, a variant perspective has portrayed them as the torchbearers of a new popular revolution. For example, Sadomba (2011) presents Zimbabwean veterans as a revolutionary vanguard that has not been simply co-opted by the elite but has also opposed and constrained the elite interests (see also Mamdani 2008 and the critical take on the latter by Hammar 2008, and a number of Zimbabwe scholars who wrote a collective response to Mamdani, published in *London Review of Books* 31(1), 2009). While Sadomba might lean too much towards uncritical acceptance of the veteran position, it is commendable that he avoids the lumping of veteran and elite interests together and pays detailed attention to the gradual evolution of the relations between them and ZANU-PF. In my view, Namibian veterans have also attempted to portray themselves in a similar light. However, the tendency to highlight their particularity in a bid to be granted symbolic and material favours by the current political regime has so far prevailed over trying seriously to form alliances with other needy groups.

‘veteran’ have been further institutionalized since the creation of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs and the officially recognized veterans’ association (Namibia National Liberation Veterans Association), adding to the consolidation of the veterans as an established interest group. However, this revision also raises a complicated set of questions. What should be counted as ‘consistent and persistent’ participation? What should have been the relation of such resistance to Swapo: one of active co-operation, or simply anti-colonial in one way or another? Does early resistance before the formation of Swapo count? Behind these questions looms a broader question of whether Namibian political history can be portrayed as a struggle between ‘colonial domination’ and ‘national resistance’, or whether it is actually a far more complicated field of relations comprising multiple actors and interests. Over time, such questions might open up the liberation narrative for re-evaluation which, on the one hand, could erode the privileged position of former exiles vis-à-vis the remainees or, alternatively, open the way for further entanglement of the politics of citizenship with liberation history, something that Swapo ex-combatants can continue using to their advantage.

In a comparative perspective, Namibian ex-combatant and veteran politics are a peculiar instance of the politics of recognition that clearly differs from social movements demanding broader inclusiveness, such as those campaigning for LGBT or other minority rights. The Swapo elite and the movement’s ex-combatants have tended to cherish a narrow, exclusive version of nationhood that highlights the particularity of those who participated in the struggle as a basis of entitlement.²⁵² In this respect, the long negotiation between Namibian ex-combatants and political authorities is comparable with forms of exclusionary nationalism and politics of difference and recognition in various parts of Africa, grounded in ethnicity, religion, territorial or genealogical origins, or other ‘cultural’ designators. However, there are also important differences. These can be highlighted by a comparison with the well-known example of Ivorian autochthonous politics (Marshall-Fratani 2006; Geschiere 2009: 98-117; Bøås and Dunn 2013). In both cases particular exclusionary processes

²⁵² This stands in contrast with the widespread view of Southern social movements as the vanguard in a struggle against global neoliberalism and for more inclusive citizenship (see, for example, Harvey 2005: 198-206; Hardt and Negri 2000: 411-413). Actually, such movements are multiple, with various identities and objectives. While one should try to understand and appreciate the hardships out of which the concerns of the underdog, such as the rank-and-file ex-combatants, arise, they should not romanticized (Ortner 1995).

are related to the claiming of de facto citizenship with reference to 'the nation'. In both, techniques and imaginaries tied to the nation-state form, such as bureaucratic classifications and narratives of national history, facilitate these claims. However, these cases look different in their relation to the supposedly unitary nationalist project.

The Ivorian case appeared as a reaction to the breakdown of such a project and was articulated in terms of supposed cultural authenticity. In contrast, instead of emphasizing cultural differences, the Namibian narrative of national liberation has manifestly sought to overcome them and to create 'unity in diversity', as the slogan goes. The current political order was founded on a fundamental antagonism between colonial rule and liberation. It situated the enemy outside the national territory and postulated a unified Namibian nation emerging from colonial oppression. This was never quite in accordance with the country's real socio-political diversity. The supposedly natural national subject was in fact constantly in the making through populist imagination and mobilization by Swapo and its allies, though the liberationist dichotomy still remains the basis of Swapo's legitimacy and is carried into distinctions in current politics. In other words, the ideal of a unitary nation rising from a struggle for liberation has become a tool for evaluating and ordering the multiple real divisions within Namibian society. There is a dynamic contradiction between the imaginary unity of the nation and attempts to be counted as its true representatives, creating memory politics in the sense of investing personal and collective remembering with political significance.

On the one hand, attempts to build and imagine the nation through a shared version of national history, reconciliation, balanced representation and provision of public goods are ongoing. On the other, particular histories of participation and sacrifices in the liberation struggle justify claims to special recognition and associated entitlements. While the ideal identity of those participating in the liberation struggle was 'Namibian,' the very process of living in an exile community during a prolonged liberation struggle engendered its own particular identity, specific to Swapo in exile. This has generated a scale of precedence or what could be titled 'liberationist autochthony' as a criterion of patriotism. The contradiction inherent in this duality between ideal and real identities has come into the open since independence and the repatriation of exiled Namibians, some of whom then became the country's new politico-administrative elite and most of whom became its ex-

combatants or veterans. Such particularist tendencies inherent in the national imaginary are being unmasked and activated by economic scarcity and competitive political situations such as electoral contestation, spurring debates and performances of patriotism and true Namibianness as a way of negotiating lines of inclusion and exclusion. The catchphrase 'all Namibians' easily slips into the format of 'all patriotic Namibians', a far less inclusive and more politically charged category, paradoxically allowing the supposedly unifying language of the nation to become a way of defining who authentically belongs to 'the people' and who does not (see also Chipkin 2004: 316; Dorman, Hammett and Nugent 2007). While the language is universalistic, its practice is particularistic, as only people with a certain background can adopt it convincingly. Thus, although the liberation narrative tells a story of the emergence of a unified nation, it has actually become a more exclusionary form of nationalism that uses the vocabulary of national belonging to make distinctions between citizens and justifies practices of inclusion and exclusion. Its strength lies in its ability to link current material politics with emotionally compelling narratives of identity, as the case of ex-combatant and veteran politics demonstrates.²⁵³

²⁵³ See Werbner (1998) for a discussion of a comparative process of memory politics leading to violently exclusionary 'quasi-nationalism' in Zimbabwe.

9 CONCLUSIONS

What role do ex-combatants play in post-conflict societies and efforts aimed at their 'reintegration'? My suggestion, on the basis of examining the Namibian case, is that it is fruitful to understand ex-combatant political agency in the context of state formation, conceived as a variable and multicausal process of institutional development that takes place both through coercion and also negotiation and political struggles. Reintegration always happens in a particular institutional setting, which sets limits to, and conditions, the political roles of ex-combatants or veterans. Despite the fact that politics in Southern societies does not occur in isolation from external forces, ultimately it is the people who live in these societies and their political struggles that remain in the driver's seat.

It is necessary, therefore, to focus on local, particular trajectories of institutional development relating to political processes that involve ex-combatants or veterans. Policies of reintegration tend to be legitimated on the basis of their working towards equalising citizens' opportunities, more stable institutions, democracy and increased security. However, the actual consequences of such interventions depend on how lines of inclusion and exclusion are drawn in defining beneficiary categories, in deciding what mechanisms of reintegration are used and in actually allocating jobs, land, money or other benefits. In these processes, policies can become a matter of contested politics both in the sense of selective biopolitics from above and of claim-making by potential beneficiary groups from below. This also relates to time scales. The afterlife of reintegration ought to be studied systematically in countries where DDR has taken place, examining what happens after the programmes are officially finished. This may broaden our understanding of significant processes of state formation and citizenship.

Throughout this study I have sought to demonstrate how ex-combatants or veterans negotiate their circumstances, and policies concerning them, as active agents instead of merely passive recipients of the decisions of others. Ex-combatant politics can largely be understood in terms of their wanting to realize their citizenship, that is, membership in the political community, in the sense of concrete recognition, entitlements and benefits. In this sense, ex-combatants take part in the political struggles in their societies, even when such struggles do not produce

nascent alternative sovereignties or reach the level of outright challenges to existing regimes. Ex-combatant status can be a resource – or a form of capital following Bourdieu (1994) – like other forms of social standing, that can be converted to other resources, for example by being deployed when making claims concerning land use, right of residence, employment, political office and so on. However, ex-combatants may also choose to refrain from highlighting – or may even distance themselves from – their status as ex-combatants. The forms taken by ex-combatant / veteran aspirations, the political struggles in which they engage and their outcomes depend on context, each of which is bound to be different – which is not to say that contexts cannot share some characteristics, for example due to historical similarities or the similar international position of the polities concerned.

One aspect of the differences between Namibia (and other Southern African contexts) versus those elsewhere on the continent is a matter of periodization: while the so-called new wars elsewhere have been the result of the breakdown of such forms of statehood that had their basis on postcolonial patronage networks, the Namibian conflict was a case of a comparatively belated and prolonged emergence into nationhood. But the very reason that postponed Namibian independence, namely Southern African settler colonialism, also created states in the region that are different in many ways from their counterparts further north on the continent. Both these aspects have had significant implications for how ‘reintegration’ and veteran politics have unfolded.

My treatment of the history of the ex-combatant issue in Namibia after independence has revealed the ways in which this apparently neutral bureaucratic exercise is tied to particular political interests and relations. As Namibia has not needed much external assistance in dealing with its ex-combatants (apart from during the early stage of transition to independence) due to the relative strength of the Namibian state and economy, Namibian authorities have been free to make ex-combatant policy decisions independently, which has created a cycle of domestically negotiated reintegration. Twenty-five years after Namibia’s transition to independence and demobilization of the fighting forces, the cycle continues as a seemingly endless process of negotiating recognition and benefits between ex-combatants-turned-veterans and political authorities. After independence, those high in Swapo’s exile hierarchy were able to convert their positions into post-war politico-economic influence, thereby setting an example for their rank-and-file

colleagues, many of whom have also attempted to utilize their position as ex-combatants: accessing resources through personal connections to those of higher rank; through demonstrations and other forms of collective pressure; and through the procedures of reintegration. Demands were made on the basis of strategic position and close ties with the current political elite. Each of the big demonstration waves has led to a new phase of negotiations and settlements between ex-combatants and political authorities, with the former reminding the latter of their shared history and earlier promises of mutual loyalty, and contrasting the very different fates of the elite and rank-and-file cadres after independence.

Right from the start, Namibian ex-combatant policies, and public discussions concerning them, have combined the discourses of ex-combatants as helpless and needy, as a security threat, and last but not least, as liberation heroes. While the first two characterizations have applied to all groups of ex-combatants, the label of heroes is reserved for former Swapo combatants. They have embodied threat and deservedness in both general and particular ways. Their status as liberation heroes has constituted their general deservedness, and their history as exile ‘comrades’ of current power holders their particular deservedness; meanwhile, creating a parallel discourse, their strategic position as former military personnel has appeared as a general threat, and their potentially subversive alternative memories of ‘the struggle’ as a particular threat. This combination has ensured their continual and selective targeting with reintegration benefits. The negotiation between the Swapo government and ex-combatants has proceeded through multiple channels, involving claims for, and granting of, formal status, employment, money, and to some extent, land and other property which, along with the simultaneous institutionalization of ‘veterans’, has increasingly turned Swapo ex-combatants into a particular, officially recognized group of citizens. This, in turn, generates support for the regime both from veterans and their dependants and sympathizers. Recognition, in this case, is bought at the price of becoming the target of biopolitical operations – which is precisely what many ex-combatants wanted. Simultaneously, the state – or the Swapo government to be more precise – buys its recognition as a legitimate authority through this selective targeting of key constituencies (see Lund 2006a: 676). The lesson is that reintegration is not the same everywhere and in every context: here it is not primarily an instance of liberal post-conflict management and peacebuilding or of transnational governmentality but, rather, one of partisan politics

of nation building and citizenship. One conclusion to be drawn from this is that studies of reintegration should be more attentive to contextuality and different trajectories of statehood and citizenship regimes rather than examining all cases with the same conceptual lenses.

As Namibian reintegration has been a negotiated process, it has also been a dynamic one, with policy shifts arising out of the gradual evolution of ex-combatant demands. One important transition has been that from public employment to monetary compensation after broad-based job provision for Swapo ex-combatants was completed. The centrality of public employment in Namibian reintegration arose out of its constituting the intersection of ex-combatant demands with what the government could provide, but also from the utility of public employment in harnessing ex-combatant agency. Apart from reflecting the freedom of Namibian politicians and planners to decide policy independently of external directives, broad-based public employment for Swapo ex-combatants reflects the fact that Namibia has had the resources to place large numbers of them in jobs. It was also a response to ex-combatant demands. They wanted jobs and money above anything else and this is what they have received: jobs in the late 1990s and compensation in the late 2000s. At the same time, as Namibia has recently emerged from a long period of violent conflict, security concerns and the imperative to control organized violence are clearly salient. The targeting of Swapo ex-combatants in reintegration and their recruitment to the public service, particularly the uniformed services, have relinked their fates with that of the Swapo government, pacifying them and making them useful in consolidating the hold of the regime over the security agencies and the marginal and frontier areas and populations. Indeed, a key reason why the demand politics of the ex-combatants has been so successful is that their interests have been largely congruent with those of the political elite; in other words, the elite has not only perceived that it is necessary to dispel the ex-combatants' potential for disruption (both concretely and symbolically), but also that they can be instrumental in consolidating the current regime.

Another major trajectory of changes in reintegration has consisted of the piecemeal extension of the concepts of ex-combatant and veteran – in terms of job provision as well as in veteran legislation and access to benefits – to cover growing numbers of groups that have been able to pass as consistent participants in the liberation struggle; this trend has been coupled with the marginalization of those

who fought on the side of the previous regime. The ability to generate plausible links with what I have called the liberation narrative has constantly produced hierarchical differences between various groups potentially classifiable as ex-combatants or veterans. This narrative is the foundation of Swapo's legitimacy, which leads to the need to preserve it and, in turn, to increased bargaining power for those seen to be heroes in this reading of history. Reintegration has entrenched the significance of participation in liberationist history as a criterion of full membership in the political community, creating divisions between groups of ex-combatants and, gradually, an ever-widening circle of 'veterans' versus others.

In a very general sense, there is nothing new in this. Processes of inclusion and exclusion have a long history in Africa, at least since the advent of colonialism. Furthermore, nationalism has been a dual force in many countries since independence, inclusivist in principle but monopolized by particular groups in practice (e.g. Dorman, Hammett and Nugent 2007: 7-8). Hence, the contemporary discourses and movements that struggle for recognition on the basis of language, religion, ethnicity, race or historical origins do not simply differ from nationalism as exclusion does from inclusion. There are more and less exclusivist versions of nationalism and such movements are not necessarily anti-national: according to context, they may be, but they may equally be seeking to reformulate and colonize nationalism itself. This depends on the particular problems to which such versions are a response, and the political arenas – local, regional, national and transnational – in which they are applied. Namibian ex-combatant reintegration exemplifies a situation wherein nationalism as a supposedly unifying force still has salience but has been appropriated by a particular narrative of belonging. This is not simply the case of a nationalist narrative of unity versus a hidden or practical subtext of particularist appropriation, as there are explicit, official statements that lay out the practical criteria for inclusion through references to recent political history. Thus, instead of representing a break from inclusive citizenship into increasing codification of particular identities competing within the national space, the Namibian case demonstrates the coexistence of a legal concept of universal national citizenship with a pervasive ideology of national belonging that is able to fill this empty signifier with positive meaning. However, the latter inherently contradicts the supposed universalism of legal citizenship. This case also demonstrates that the 'group logic' prevalent in African struggles over citizenship is not a result of some

kind of traditional mentality; rather it arises from the long trajectory of how statuses have been assigned in African citizenship regimes through the colonial and postcolonial periods, replicating the tendency to fragment political identities along sub-national group lines (see Mamdani 2007); therefore, claims advanced as a professed member of a group are more likely to be recognized than claims advanced as an individual citizen. The crucial question is how to counter this tendency without resorting to narrow dictates of national unity that easily give rise to greater grievance, sense of exclusion and fragmentation.

This calls for closer examination, in specific national contexts, of the development and establishment of national citizenship regimes, looking for the extent to which tendencies of particularism, including openly exclusivist reformulations of nationalism, have been installed alongside abstract, legal notions of universal citizenship (see Dorman, Hammett and Nugent 2007: 12). Some current ethno-historically, linguistically or religiously articulated versions of nationalism (e.g. Geschiere 2009 and 2011; Bøås and Dunn 2013; Marshall-Fratani 2006; Englebort 2009) apparent elsewhere in Africa share their exclusivism with Southern African liberationist nationalisms, thereby highlighting the deep-seated practice of unifying political communities through the exclusion of an internal other (Agamben 1998). Yet this is merely a tendency, not fate. The myths of national origins and unity need not exclude a segment of a nation's current population in order to function, but may also revolve around more abstract principles or distant historical events. Additionally, the content and significance of such myths as a factor in social cohesion can change according to different times and circumstances. Consider, for example, German society in the 1930s as opposed to now; or the United States as a nation that lacks any immediately apparent markers of unity (such as a single or official language, or religious or ethnic homogeneity). Indeed, what seems to unify the latter is a historical narrative that elevates the tolerance of diversity as a major value that has facilitated dynamism and success.

The long-term effects of Namibian veteran politics remain to be seen. On the one hand, the objectives of reconciling multiple groups in a single territory and building a nation, evident in some of the decisions and statements associated with reintegration as well as in Namibian political discourse more generally, are countered by the persistence of pre-independence political logics and divisions, and concentration of power according to liberationist fault lines. It is not surprising that a

militant version of nationalism, comparable to ‘patriotic history’ in Zimbabwe (Ranger 2004; Kriger 2006), seems appealing to certain political elites in their bid to justify the current regime and entrench their own positions within it. The ways in which ex-combatant and veteran policies have unfolded have undoubtedly contributed to this end. Through its choices of inclusion and exclusion, the regime is making statements about the preferred qualities of citizens. At the same time, when it includes some, it simultaneously excludes others, potentially antagonizing them. While employing former Swapo exiles and paying them compensation has pacified them and tied their fates closely to the current regime, it has also created fiscal strains and feelings of injustice among their former enemies as well as many other Namibians, which might erode the capacity and legitimacy of the regime in the long run.

On the other hand, in the longer run the politics of ex-combatants and veterans may also offer a template for more broad-based demands that question entrenched patterns of economic and political privilege (see also Fraser 2000: 119-120), and engender responses that may lead towards more inclusive citizenship, the extension and universalization of social policy, and more broadly legitimated authority. The story of Namibian ex-combatant reintegration provides an example of how statehood and citizenship may be mutually constituted in processes of negotiation between political authorities and their constituencies. While the demands, and resulting recognition, of ex-combatants have been fuelled by the sense of entitlement that arose out of their specific, regimented wartime experiences in exile, conditions are in place for many other Namibians to feel similarly entitled and make demands: these include perceptions of the Namibian state as capable of pooling and redistributing resources; the universalization of citizenship with independence; and precedents such as a universal old-age pension and ex-combatant and veteran benefits. However, it is not given that such a process of extension will take place, for it would require, first, the development and preservation of channels of political negotiation in the broad sense, through which demands can be made and resolved and, second, the continued availability of sufficient revenue to fund redistributive policies.

The question, then, is which of these tendencies will prevail: in other words, whether the forging and deepening of linkages between political authorities and citizens that has occurred in Namibian ex-combatant and veteran politics will offer a

template or inspiration for more broad-based demands and responses and thus, for more inclusive citizenship and legitimate authority; or whether it will be compromised by the narrow, partisan application of the historical narrative of national liberation. Fundamentally, stable statehood would seem to require two simultaneous processes: first, overcoming the extremely unequal legacy of colonialism that forms the politico-economic basis of grievances; and second, generating shared narratives of history and the political community – ‘the nation’ – that are not identified with the profiles and interests of particular groups. It would be difficult to address the latter concern without addressing the former, given that unequal politico-economic conditions continue to motivate strategically positioned groups to seek recognition. Conversely, if partisan narratives of history are not addressed, they will easily translate into renewed politico-economic divisions and provide a breeding ground for future conflicts over state spoils. The problem is that this dual, long-term objective would require moving away from liberationist nationalism and might therefore seem threatening to the ruling elite in the short term. The societal dividing line and emotionally rewarding positions of identity offered by liberationist antagonism help prevent the consolidation of alternative political frontlines bred by divisions between the politico-economic elite and the poor majority – a division of which popular discourse is acutely aware and that unifies people across the fault lines of liberation. Therefore, for the time being, contests over which particular interests are to gain the upper hand might prevail over achieving a more balanced political order.

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