THE ROLE OF EX-COMBATANTS AND VETERANS IN VIOLENCE IN TRANSITIONAL SOCIETIES

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SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This paper provides an overview of the issue of ex-combatants and violence as it exists in the southern African region. The paper shows the scale, incidence and consequences of the various roles of ex-combatants and veterans in violence in transitional societies. The paper aims to compare and explore: militarised masculinity and its impact on violence; the processes of demobilisation, demilitarisation, reintegration and rehabilitation; issues of identity and trauma; and the role of weapons.

The southern African states of Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe each suffered armed conflict at various times from the 1960s to the early 1990s. Post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants was crafted and implemented as part of the broader transition from war to peace in all five countries. The pursuit of peace and stability through the management of weapons and sustainable reintegration of ex-combatants was one of the primary goals of these programmes. However, in all cases, DDR fell short of meeting this target, with different security and stability implications within a decade or so of the implementation of DDR. Findings from the majority of these case studies show that ex-combatants have been implicated in acts of violence and these countries still grapple with remedying this. Against this backdrop, the concept paper deals with an extended transitional period starting with the peace negotiations to the present.
DEFINITION OF KEY TERMINOLOGY

There is a wide array of publications, including significant UN literature, which presents the conceptual framework of DDR processes.¹ This concept paper adopts the following traditional definitions of disarmament, demobilisation, reinsertion and reintegration provided by the United Nations:²

**Disarmament** is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and the light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes.

Unsuccessful disarmament means that arms and ammunition – the tools of violence – will remain accessible to ex-combatants. The availability of arms undermines the chances of creating secure and stable frameworks during usually volatile immediate post conflict situations.

**Demobilisation** is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilisation may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilisation entails the support package provided to the demobilised, which is called reinsertion.

**Reinsertion** is the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilisation but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long-term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs, and can last up to one year.


² See note by the Secretary-General on administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of UN peacekeeping operations, 24 May 2005 (A/C.5/59/31).
Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a process with an open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country, is a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance.

Reintegration is a complex, long-term process through which ex-combatants and their dependants are assisted to (re)settle in post-war communities (social), become part of the decision-making process (political), engage in sustainable civilian employment and livelihoods (economic), as well as adjust attitudes and expectations and/or deal with their war related mental trauma (psychological).³ Reintegration initiatives are designed to ensure relief assistance, capacity, and the eventual long-term self-sufficiency of beneficiaries. The initiatives include: registration, provision of civilian clothing, cash payments at the time of demobilisation and subsequent intervals, foodstuffs, household utensils, land allocation, agricultural training, inputs and implements, school fees, counselling, legal or entrepreneurial advice, management and technical advice, credit schemes, vocational training, job placement, health support, and referral services.

DDR therefore aims to transform ex-combatants into peaceful civilians.⁴ Successful implementation of the process will minimise the chance of ex-fighters engaging in violence by ensuring that their basic needs after disarmament are met.

EX-COMBATANTS: BACKGROUND AND PREDISPOSITION TO VIOLENCE

If DDR is unsuccessful, ex-combatants’ susceptibility to involvement in different forms of violence during transitions from war to long term peace is unquestionable. Certain characteristics stand out. The World Bank, itself a major provider of technical and financial assistance to governments planning and implementing demobilisation and reintegration processes, points out that survey data for DDR cases suggest many former combatants lack basic education, marketable job skills, and for some, the social skills needed for successful economic and social integration. Nicole Ball summarises it succinctly when she states that ‘The typical (war) veteran is semiliterate at best, is unskilled, has few personal possessions, often has no housing or land, and frequently has many dependents.’ The ex-combatants’ need for support is undeniable. They require humanitarian assistance, taking into consideration their immediate post war unemployed status and the fact that they have lost time and opportunities while fighting to liberate their countries and improve the prospects of their kith and kin. The livelihood, security and status of ex-combatants prior to the termination of the conflict would have depended on their military capabilities, military supplies and possession of weapons. The ease with which ex-combatants identify with their military past and the difficulties involved in confronting uncertain civilian livelihoods necessitates the need for reintegration assistance. If unsuccessfully disarmed and reintegrated, ex-combatants may fall back on their military training and weapons possession in order to engage in criminal activities, as we shall see below from southern Africa’s experience.

Ex-combatants are also vulnerable to war-related mental trauma. Their mental health problems are exacerbated by the social and psychological stressors associated with reintegration in post-war contexts. In addition, a hyper-masculine culture often prevails in times of war. Combatants subscribe to a mode of masculinity that is imbued with a sense of manly physical strength, personal invulnerability, and high levels of conquest desensitised to violence. These battlefield dispositions, alongside psychological distress, can lead to ex-combatants engaging in various forms of violence during war to peace transitions. The UN noted that:

Ex-combatants, especially when they are young, may have become a ‘lost generation’, having been deprived of education, employment and training during the conflict period, suffering war trauma, becoming addicted to alcohol and drugs, and dependent on weapons and violence as the only means to make their way in the world. When they lose their military livelihood, they are likely to experience difficulties in adapting to civilian life. Male ex-combatants may engage in anti-social behaviour within their families and communities, contributing to an increase in economic and social — especially sexual — violence.

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7 Kingma, op. cit. note 3, p. 226.
Successful specialised psycho-social reintegration of ex-combatants can minimise the eruption of such violence.

EX-COMBATANTS AND VIOLENCE IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICA REGION

This paper’s overview of southern Africa is based on the following causal linkages and use of appropriate case studies:

An analysis of the region shows that poorly crafted and implemented DDR processes can result in ex-combatants’ involvement in various acts of violence, mostly in pursuit of recompense from the state.

Evidence from southern Africa shows that, in certain cases, this violence was organised on the basis of a common identity, representative veterans’ associations and/or relations with the ruling party of the day. The ‘governments that had failed to properly reintegrate ex-combatants later found themselves with a price to pay, as restive ex-fighters threatened national stability.’

In Zimbabwe, demobilisation and reintegration suffered from programmatic and institutional gaps and by 1990 up to 25,000 ex-combatants were unemployed. The founding of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) provided the ex-combatants with an institutionalised structure and a platform to lobby for government’s recognition, welfare support and their own relevancy within a post-conflict society. Consequently, the identity of ex-combatants as ‘war veterans’ became entrenched. This was accompanied by the gradual evolution of a certain militancy as ZNLWVA sought the recognition and glorification of the liberation roles of its membership. The ex-fighters would mobilise their ‘war veterans’ identity to achieve – at times via violent means and strategic alliance with the ruling ZANU PF party – their economic and political aims. Krieger argues that the relationship between the ruling ZANU PF and the war veterans has consistently been characterised by ‘power seeking agendas, their appeals to the revolutionary liberation, their use of violence and intimidation’ and their ‘simultaneous conflict and collaboration as party and veterans manipulate one another.’ For instance, following problematic reintegration, the governments’ suspension of a war victims’ fund, which had become the most important escape route from destitution for ex-combatants, created an explosive situation and the government soon found itself at loggerheads with disgruntled ex-combatants who held rolling protests against perceived bureaucratic bungling and mistreatment. The protests in Harare, which often turned ugly, included stopping at the gates of the presidential residency (State House and Zimbabwe House), demonstrating

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outside the presidential offices (Munhumutapa Building) during the course of a cabinet meeting, demonstrating at the African-American Summit, and disrupting Heroes Day commemorations at the National Heroes Acre. War veterans (and party youth) also featured prominently as the ruling ZANU PF party’s political campaign vanguard and election agents in the violent land reform programme and in the 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections. Sections of the same groups have also reportedly been conveniently mobilised by ZANU PF in the country’s current uncertain post-election debacle in which a number of suspected opposition supporters have allegedly been intimidated and even killed.

Namibia’s successful disarmament and demobilisation was undermined by the independence government’s failure to plan and implement comprehensive reintegration programmes. The high expectations for a comfortable post-independence livelihood vanished amongst many disenchanted ex-members of the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) who failed to reintegrate fully into Namibian society. The euphoria of the return from exile, the elections and the excitement over independence were replaced by varied socio-economic hardships and vices including depression, alcoholism, suicide and, in certain instances, recourse to violent behaviour. The threat to national security and stability posed by the unemployed and frustrated PLAN ex-fighters solidified in public disruption and rioting for welfare support (such as cash payments), employment and recognition from the government. In 1995, a large number of ex-PLAN fighters marched on the Presidential and Prime Ministerial offices. More serious protests took place in July 1997, coinciding with similar protests by veterans in Zimbabwe. Protests continued throughout Namibia in 1998. For instance, in July 1998 unemployed ex-PLAN fighters from Okahao and Outapi embarked on a ‘march for jobs’ to Ondangwa Airport calling on the government to help them secure employment. Having camped at the airport for more than three weeks, the original protestors were joined by ex-fighters from the Oshikoto and Ohangwena regions who had been employed by the Development Brigade Corporation – set up to provide jobs for former combatants – and who were now experiencing problems with their companies. The ex-combatants lamented their neglect by the government. As recently as 5 June 2007, 100 former PLAN freedom fighters marched on the Ministry of Veteran Affairs in Windhoek city centre with similar demands.\(^\text{14}\)

In South Africa, one time gratuity payments, a counselling and advisory service, and a Service Corps training scheme failed to provide sustainable reintegration for ex-combatants. Unsuccessfully reintegrated ex-combatants engaged in small scale protests to highlight their grievances. As early as August 1993, 27 unemployed and disenchanted former members of the African National Congress’s military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), staged a 10 day sit-in at the ANC’s Durban offices to demand welfare support, paralysing its operations. In November 2000, about 100 unemployed MK and Azania Peoples Liberation Army (APLA) ex-fighters demonstrated in the Western Cape, and on 17 August 2002 some ex-combatants joined the Social Movement Forum protest against the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. While the protests inside South Africa may have been diminutive in nature, South African ex-combatants and veterans have had a negative impact on the broader regional stability.\(^\text{15}\) South Africa was the major regional supplier of


mercenaries to war zones such as Angola. The transition from apartheid to democracy in 1994 was accompanied by the exodus of many SADF soldiers disinclined to be part of new defence forces. This, together with the disbandment of counterinsurgency units such as 32-Battalion, the Koevoet (crowbar) unit and the later withdrawal of both white and black personnel from the new military force, resulted in a niche-source of mercenaries.

Mozambique’s reintegration strategy, whose major component was a two year long cash compensation programme known as the Reintegration Support Scheme (RSS), succeeded in ‘paying and scattering’ the demobilised soldiers. Two ex-combatants’ associations were later established to represent the interests of their members and since then the ex-fighters have expressed their discontent on a number of occasions. In 1996, ex-fighters engaged in sporadic riots against unemployment and the need for war pensions. The fact that by April 1999 only 5 000 of the 22 000 registered Renamo ex-fighters were eligible for pensions is illuminating. Significantly, however, some of Mozambique’s ex-combatants have demonstrated their willingness and ability to serve as advocates against violence and as agents for change. In 1997, ex-soldiers from the ruling party Frelimo and the rebel Renamo joined to establish an association entitled Propaz (For Peace). The association works in six provinces of the country, where its volunteers help local communities to solve conflicts without using violence.

Evidence from southern Africa indicates that the failure to sufficiently reintegrate former combatants leads to their involvement in violent crime.

Collier’s 1994 micro- and macro-insecurity framework links unsustainably reintegrated ex-combatants with the commission of crimes. For example, UNIDIR concluded that increased levels of crime in Angola in the late 1990s could be linked to the DDR programme, which failed to remove weapons from society and to reintegrate former combatants in a manner conducive to establishing income activities. In Mozambique and South Africa, some demobilised combatants resorted to banditry. There is a widely held perception that ineffectively reintegrated South African ex-fighters have been involved in armed criminal activities, mainly cash-in-transit heists and other robberies. It is against this backdrop that, 14 years after the transition to democracy, institutions such as the National Peace Accord Trust is running a rehabilitation programme to provide ex-combatants from the anti-apartheid struggle with skills that they can use as an alternative to resorting to violent crime. There have also been reports that some formerly high-ranking Mozambican ex-combatants were involved in criminal activities such as illicit arms trading, contract assassinations, money laundering and drug trafficking. These criminal activities have also
been linked to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region, which is partly attributable to incomplete post-conflict disarmament.

The lack of clear information, counselling and referral systems increases the likelihood that unsuccessfully reintegrated former combatants will become violent.

The absence of clear information, counselling and referral systems negatively impacts the briefing and orientation of former combatants at discharge, and support for them throughout the reintegration process. In addition, the community and families that are meant to absorb the former combatants may not be well-primed to do so. The Zimbabwe government’s reintegration policy of disseminating relevant information to ex-combatants was not broadly and consistently implemented. The long idle months that ex-combatants spent in the assembly points awaiting integration and demobilisation were not productively used to compile a database of the ex-combatants as well as initiate pre-discharge orientation. Ex-combatants lamented the government programme’s lack of clarity, failure to compile their socio-economic profiles and career aspirations, and lack of workable support and monitoring mechanisms. These deficiencies contributed to unsustainable reintegration and subsequent involvement in demonstrations by affected combatants.

On paper, South Africa’s reintegration programme ostensibly included a counselling and advisory service to guide the ex-fighters on how to manage their gratuities as well as to advise ex-combatants on the options available to support their reintegration. In practice, ex-fighters argue that limited participant surveys and orientation was one of the institutional weaknesses that worked against the potential of the Service Corps to facilitate productive ex-fighter reintegration. The result was unsuccessful reintegration that led to ex-fighters taking part in acts of violence. Likewise, Namibia’s Development Brigade (later Development Brigade Corporation) training programme, designed to impart practical agricultural and construction skills sufficient for sustainable post-integration income generation to the unemployed ex-combatants, produced mostly ineffective training as the protests of the mid-late 1990s bear witness to.

Ex-combatants in societies in transition are faced with inevitable psychosocial challenges as they grapple with the violence of the past. These challenges include anger; coping with the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), such as nightmares and flashbacks, relationship difficulties, mistrust, difficulties with adjusting to family life, stress and depression. Against this backdrop, war traumatised and highly militarised ex-combatants can be a threat to their receiving communities. In South Africa’s case, the impact has included violent attitudes and crime. South African ex-combatants lacked official psychosocial rehabilitation programmes and, given the high costs of professional and clinical psychosocial support, most ex-fighters resorted to either traditional help or peer support,


often with adverse results. Others took refuge in alcohol, which often compounds the situation.

In Zimbabwe, cases abound of both male and female ex-combatants taking refuge in alcohol abuse in order to deal with their stress in the absence of psychosocial interventions. Female ex-combatants still exhibit adverse psychological reactions and behaviours, which reflect the severity and chronic nature of wartime stressors. These include victimisation through acts of murder, torture and rape, as well as the indirect effects of displacement, loss of home or property, family separation and disintegration, poverty and illness.

In Namibia, Health Minister Dr Libertina Amathila revealed a ‘dramatic increase’ in the number of Namibians requesting treatment for mental illnesses in 1998. PEACE Centre (People’s Education, Assistance and Counselling for Empowerment), a Namibian NGO and psychosocial healing centre for survivors of organised violence, whose clients include ex-PLAN, ex-SWATF and ex-SADF fighters, victims of torture in SWAPO detention camps and ex-refugees, attributed an increase in suicides and criminal violence to unresolved traumas of the past. However, private psychiatry service providers are scarce, expensive, and located in the major centres, which in 2002 meant that they were within reach of only 15 percent of the population. This means that most psycho-trauma victims could not access expert assistance.

In all three cases, the lamentable psychological conditions of the ex-combatants were exacerbated by the frustrations emanating from problematic social and economic reintegration.

The paradigm of militarised masculinity is imbued with a sense of manly physical strength, personal invulnerability, and high levels of conquest that increase the potential for ex-combatant violence.

Reintegration programmes that did not include proper counselling mechanisms to transform violent wartime masculine identities did not help matters. In the Zimbabwean context, political violence and torture was recorded in the Matabeleland and Midlands disturbances and elections, in which ex-combatants and ruling party youth participated with hyper-masculine vigilance. Women were also victims of violent acts including rape. It is against such a backdrop that male war veterans can be perceived to play the role of perpetrators of violence. Conversely, unsuccessfully reintegrated male ex-combatants who felt frustrated by their failure to fulfil the masculine role of provider for their families were prone to committing domestic violence and abusing alcohol.

In South Africa, a tendency towards aggressive and violent behaviour among ex-fighters may be explained as much in terms of previous masculine military environments as by a lack of

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psychosocial rehabilitation. In Mozambique’s case, female ex-combatants who married their male counterparts also became victims of domestic violence.

Issues of identity can impact issues around former combatants and violence.

As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, one way that issues of identity can impact on former combatants and violence is when ex-combatants coalesce around a common war veteran identity and/or representative body and demand – at times violently – certain forms of compensation and support that they believe they are entitled to from the state. Another manifestation of the above link occurs when certain sections of the ex-combatant community feel ostracised from the perceived ‘right’ identity. The failure to disarm ZANLA and ZIPRA combatants awaiting integration led to armed clashes between the two hostile factions in the troop assembly points. Subsequent attempts by the government to disarm the combatants were perceived by ZIPRA combatants as disparate and designed to enhance the military power of ex-ZANU cadres. Some of these ZAPU former combatants then engaged in violent dissident activity in the Midlands and Matabeleland. Instead of being ex-combatants they became peace spoilers. The lack of a common national war veteran identity and the subsequent violence in the two regions only ended with the signing of the Unity Accord of 1987 between ZANU and ZAPU.

In the Angolan case, former UNITA soldiers did not classify themselves as fully ‘civilianised’ more than three years after the conflict had formally ended in 2002. It is notable, however, that holding on to their military identity – a personal identity perception of not being fully integrated – has not translated into the perpetration of violence.

Gender as a source of identity had an important link to (perceptions of) the outcome of former female combatants’ reintegration in Zimbabwe and Namibia. As shall be seen later, Zimbabwe typifies how identity according to gender can determine the outcome of women ex-fighters’ reintegration. Despite the vital contribution that women fighters made in the liberation struggle, some of them were not eager to take up the war veteran identity against the backdrop of a gender insensitive demobilisation and reintegration policy, and unfriendly community perceptions. Many female combatants self-demobilised in the 1980s, apparently to expedite the severance of ties with a traumatising military past – a choice that carried the weight of self-reintegration in a patriarchal society that viewed them as having played unfeminine roles. These women were candidates for PTSD and the related negative consequences. Similar negative perceptions had a comparable impact on women in Namibia.

Evidence from southern Africa shows that the absence of targeted assistance for special groups, such as women and the disabled, may lead the concerned former combatants to engage in acts of violence.

Zimbabwe’s demobilisation and reintegration policy was not gender-sensitive. Women ex-combatants were not treated as special and important stakeholders in the DDR process. This meant that female ex-combatants faced additional reintegration problems compared to their male counterparts. There were also no long-term specific provisions for the rehabilitation of women.

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27 Gear, op. cit., note 25.
and reintegration of the physically disabled ex-fighters with specific needs. A National Rehabilitation Centre established for ex-combatants lacked a coherent plan and was yet to fully realise its potential when it was abruptly closed to former combatants in 1985. Being unemployed and disabled meant that the frustrated former combatants were vulnerable to taking recourse in antisocial behaviour.

In Namibia’s case, there were also no specific reintegration programmes for female ex-fighters. The generally inadequate reintegration process relegated female freedom fighters to official oblivion against the background of a conservative society. It is not surprising, therefore, that women ex-fighters were active participants in post-independence protests calling for government assistance. For instance, a list compiled by the jobless ex-fighters demonstrating at Okahao in 1998 indicated that there were 115 women, 65 men and 7 children gathered at the northern town. The physically impaired ex-combatants confronted a double jeopardy in comparison with their able-bodied counterparts. In addition to the absence of a generalised comprehensive reintegration strategy, there were restricted governmental rehabilitation programmes for the wartime injured and psychologically distressed combatants. This occurred despite the fact that about 10 percent of the ex-combatants suffered from physical and psychological disabilities. The contribution of this to the link between ex-fighters and violence is evidenced elsewhere in this paper. The fact that further and targeted assistance for disabled ex-fighters was put in place in 1998 following ex-combatant protests confirms this.

In Mozambique, where female ex-combatants constituted a mere 1.48 percent of the total recognised demobilisation caste, sentiments of being used for political purposes and being neglected during the transition and post-conflict eras also exist. This included lack of specialised psychological support. Women ex-combatants told stories of ‘renegotiation of roles, responsibilities and issues surrounding access to and control of household resources. Marital relations have been under strain and some marriages have not survived. There has been an increase in domestic violence and women have been exposed to infection by STDs and perhaps HIV/AIDS, considering the risk factor involved with the use of astringents in the vagina’. Baden quotes a researcher who ‘witnessed many women losing their independence within their homes, their livelihoods; some women becoming even more burdened with work as they were abandoned by their war-husbands and, even more tragically, some women became victims of violence within their own homes, long after the fighting had stopped.’ Disabled ex-combatants housed in assembly points manned by UNOMOZ engaged in protests such as roadblocks to raise attention around their specific needs. The specific needs of former Renamo child soldiers – who have now reached adulthood – were not addressed, constantly raising a red flag.

The above cases present a missed opportunity to support female ex-combatants, who had experience as both perpetrators and victims of violence, towards becoming agents of peace.

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30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

and human rights activists, such as the Forum for Activists against Torture (FACT) did in Rwanda.

The absence of community-based reintegration decreases the communities’ absorptive capacity thereby creating potential for violence.

In Zimbabwe, the society in which ex-combatants had to reintegrate was excluded from DDR programmes devised by the government. This may have contributed to an antagonistic relationship between the wider society and ex-combatants, particularly after the latter were perceived to be a special group following the government’s implementation of a war veteran’s compensation package. At a more familial level, there were cases where families and returned disabled combatants both found it difficult to cope with the new situation. Disabled ex-combatants, who were disillusioned at the lack of community acceptance and were angry, resorted to anti-social and violent behaviour that led to hostile attacks against the ex-combatants. Patriarchal gender relations and an uninformed and thus indifferent wider society contributed to the ostracism of female former fighters. Female ex-fighters also found sections of society unyielding. Some female ex-combatants faced reintegration constraints by virtue of society’s misperception that they played unwomanly liberation war roles, and because they were despised as being too independent, rough, ill educated and unfeminine to be good wives. Most female ex-combatants who returned with fatherless children were disowned by their own families and lived as misfits seeking solace in drug and alcohol abuse, as government did not offer them specific assistance.33

In South Africa’s case, Mashike argues that ‘there was never an effective reintegration process in the sense of a systematic and coherent attempt to facilitate the transition of former guerrilla combatants into their communities with access to livelihoods and supportive social networks.’34

Ineffective DDR during the early transitional stages undermines prospects for peace as previously warring parties may re-mobilise ex-combatants, resulting in a relapse of conflict.

Angola represents how ineffective DDR can easily cause antagonistic armies to recidivate. Failed attempts at DDR twice contributed to the resumption of armed conflict between the Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA). For instance, the loopholes in the disarmament and demobilisation process allowed the opposing armies to retain/return to combat readiness and easily recidivate in the aftermath of UNITA’s rejection of the 1992 election outcome.35 The result was the destructive war that took place between October 1992 and late 1994, during which human casualties were conservatively placed at 300,000 (or 3 percent of the population) by Human Rights Watch.

In Zimbabwe, former combatants were perpetrators of violence in the transitional period that followed a peace settlement, which resulted in armed conflict. In the run-up to the Commonwealth-supervised independence elections ZANLA cadres, whom ZANU PF had

33 Sadomba & Dzinesa, op. cit. note 28
34 Mashike & Mokalobe, op. cit. note 25.
35 Dzinesa, op. cit. note 23, p. 76.
reserved as a strategic force outside designated troop assembly points, conducted an illegal election campaign of violence and intimidation. Immediate post-independence failure to disarm ex-combatants awaiting reintegration contributed to armed dissident activity in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands from 1981 to 1987, during which some former ZIPRA combatants took up arms against the government. The government responded to this internal security problem by deploying the integrated army units and the specially created North Korean trained 5th Brigade, also known as Gukurahundi (Shona for ‘the rain that washes away the chaff from the last harvest, before the spring rains’). An estimated 10 000 civilians lost their lives and thousands more were harmed during the 5th Brigade’s campaign, as violence and insecurity rocked Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands until the signing of the historic Unity Accord of 1987 by ZANU and ZAPU.

During Namibia’s UN supervised transition from conflict to independence, initial shortcomings in the disarmament and demobilisation process contributed to the ex-fighter-violence nexus. For instance, about 2000 former members of the paramilitary Koevoet unit were integrated into the police force instead of being completely demobilised, while former members of the disbanded South West Africa Territorial Force retained their military gear and maintained contact with ‘former’ commanders. These supposedly ‘demobilised’ personnel perpetrated acts of intimidation and destabilisation that included hunting down and eliminating PLAN combatants and menacing the general population, especially in SWAPO strong-holds.

The National minutes, accords and agreements that led to South Africa’s transition from apartheid to democracy did not end mistrust, competition and military machinations amongst the parties. The volatile transitional period made it strategically imperative for the military factions, including MK, to retain their weapons. Failure to complete the disarmament process may have contributed to South Africa’s multi-causal and destructive small arms scourge.

Mozambique’s demobilisation and reintegration process, which was managed by UNOMOZ during the transitional period to the October 1994 election, was not immune to the potential of collapse. At one point, the extent of the mutiny by ex-fighters in the assembly points due to poor conditions and uncertainties with the lengthy process threatened the entire peace process.36 The revolts included blocking main roads to demand swift discharge.

CONCLUSION

By their very nature ex-combatants possess certain qualities that predispose them to various forms of violence, including criminal and domestic violence, if they are unsuccessfully reintegrated. An overview of southern Africa’s experience shows that there is a link between gaps in DDR processes and the involvement of ex-combatants and veterans in violence in transitional societies. The timeframe of the different countries’ transitional period has been prolonged as many of them are still experiencing violence involving ex-combatants more than a decade after the crafting and implementation of DDR. A major challenge therefore emerges regarding the specification of the timeframes of the transitional period. While

36 Kingma, op. cit. note 15, p. 141.
dedicated studies have been carried out in South Africa,\textsuperscript{37} it is also clear that further empirical research and in-country surveys are required to further profile the issue of ex-combatants and violence as it exists in the broader southern Africa region.

\textsuperscript{37} For example: Gear, \emph{op. cit.} note 25; Mashike & Mokalobe, \emph{op. cit.} note 25; Bandeira, \emph{op. cit.} note 8.
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