

A Conflicts Forum Monograph

Lessons for Lebanon:

Disarmament and Demilitarization in Namibia

by Alastair Crooke*

Conflicts Forum: Beirut - London - Washington

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*Alastair Crooke is the co-Director of Conflicts Forum, an international non-governmental organization that works for understanding between the West and the Muslim world.

HISTORIANS look back on the quest for Namibian independence in the 1970s and 1980s as a success story: here was an international initiative that ended colonialism, dampened a brutal civil conflict and eventually produced stability in Southwest Africa. It was also the one conflict in which, in the midst of the Cold War, the international community found a sense of unusual comity -- it was “a success story,” one of the few African success stories in the two decades of strife and confrontation of the 1970s and 1980s. The conflict in Namibia, it is now said, was the one area in which constant and patient Western mediation, and the application of well-worn conflict resolution techniques, actually worked. And yet a closer reading of history shows that this is not the case; instead a study of the narrative history of the Namibia conflict shows that the accepted story of “comity” was, in fact, far more complex. The mediation practiced by the confrontation’s major actors was fraught with difficulties and the struggle to end the conflict in Southwest Africa was inconsistent -- this was an “accidental victory” at best. In the end, attempts to resolve the Namibia conflict were wrought with misunderstandings, mismanagement, violence, and series of ineffective international “resolutions.”

Some background is essential. Namibia (formerly Deutsch-Sudwestafrika), is a dry plateau nation swept by the winds of northern Africa and the eastern Atlantic.¹ The land has been inhabited since the fourth century by tribal Africans: Bushmen, Damara, Namaqua and (from the 1300s) by immigrating Bantus. The lands of Southwest Africa were not explored by Europeans until the nineteenth century, when the country came largely under German control.² After the defeat of the Central Powers in World War One, Southwest Africa reverted to international mandate, which was eventually ceded by the League of Nations to South Africa. After the end of World War Two, South Africa officially annexed the nation -- without international recognition and in defiance of international norms. The remoteness of Southwest Africa and its geographic status outside of the traditional areas of confrontation of the major powers, is precisely what the fight for its control made it unique to history -- and why it was so difficult for the great powers of the mid-twentieth century to resolve the conflict that plagued its peoples.

In 1966, the Southwest Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO) was established

¹ See, An African Classical Age, Eastern and Southern Africa in World History, 1001 BC to 400 AD, Christopher Ehret, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 2001.

² The Germans were attracted by the land’s mineral resources and by the perceived need to compete with Great Britain and other states for overseas colonies. Competition for control of the resources of Southwest Africa was begun early, as the British had inhabited Walvis Bay, on the coast, while the Germans attempted to exploit the minerals in the country’s plateau regions. Namibia’s history has been virtually ignored in both scholarly and popular writings in the US and Europe, with the result that Namibia’s “Country Profiles” compiled by the US Central Intelligence Agency and the BBC remain the authoritative sources of information on the nation’s earlier settlements. See also: “Angola -- A Brief Profile,” in Disengagement from Southwest Africa, ed. Owen Ellison Kahn, Transaction Publishers, London, 1991.

to wrest control of Namibia from South Africa.³ The guerrilla group launched a war of independence from what it viewed as South Africa's colonial control of its territory. Over a period of twenty-two years, SWAPO fought a series of high-profile engagements against South African forces, with both the guerrilla group and the South African government claiming popular support from among the territory's population. Both groups recruited from the Namibian population: South African forces fought stand-alone battles in Namibia and acted through a proxy army, which it has established to lend credibility to its claim that Namibia preferred South African control of their territory to indigenous control by Marxist guerrillas. The existence of this indigenous, albeit South African-controlled army enormously complicated both the final political settlement and the eventual reintegration of forces when Namibia gained its independence.⁴ Additionally, Cuban and Angolan forces were involved in the conflict, and established their own small militias in Namibia. These forces appeared and operated under various names throughout the decades of the 1970s and 1980s. While these militias were not a part of the political process, they eventually became a part of the final political settlement and thence a part of the final security and military reintegration process.⁵ Further, the United States, Europe and the United Nations each attempted separately and then in concert to end the conflict over a period of twenty years, beginning in the late 1970s. A process for eventual independence was inaugurated by the international community on December 31, 1978 but that effort quickly evaporated -- a result of contentions brought on by claims and counter-claims by the U.S. (an ally of South Africa) and the Soviet Union (a supporter of SWAPO). It was not until March of 1987 that the international community was able to provide a robust, substantive and vigorous mediation effort, but it took another thirteen years for peace to finally come to Southwest Africa.⁶

Many flaws in the effort to end the conflict in Southwest Africa are echoed in the later proposals to disarm militias in Lebanon -- and, in particular, in the continuing debate over how best to effect the disarmament of Hezbollah. This paper examines the consequences of relying on the tool of "constructive diplomatic ambiguity" in the context of that conflict and how that "constructive

³ The most exhaustive study of the relationship between land and political movements can be found in *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition, The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda*, Nat J. Colletta, Markus Kostner, Ingo Wiederhofer, ed., World Bank Discussion Paper No. 331, The World Bank, pp. 127- 216. This work also forms the basis of the detailed study of reintegration and demobilization efforts, and their failures in Southwest Africa, as outlined in this monograph.

⁴ The variety and diversity of militias can be easily seen in the names given them: the international community eventually grouped SWAPO and Cuban and Angolan forces "and others" under the term Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and subsumed two groups of South African forces: the South African Defence Forces (SADF) and South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF).

⁵ *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition*, p. 127.

⁶ See, *East Africa, An Introductory History*, Robert M. Maxon, West Virginia University, Martinsburg, 1994.

diplomatic ambiguity” can be used to effect a sensible and stable disarmament effort. The paper will also deal with collateral disarmament issues that include: the risks of propaganda that singles out and demonizes an organized people and their armed defenders (creating a mindset that works to the detriment of an international initiative’s original disseminators), the failure of external parties to engage with “friendly” parties, and the tendency of the international community to view security and disarmament issues as mere “technical issues” -- as opposed to fundamental national self-determination questions on which political resolutions depend.⁷ Finally, and seminally, this paper will exam the central notion that animated mediators in the Southwest Africa conflict: whether the “disarmament” of SWAPO as a condition of conflict resolution was ill-fated, and whether it might have been possible to predict the collapse of a series of mediation efforts that were hampered by diplomats who insisted on the “disarmament” of SWAPO rather than its “demilitarization.”

Our conclusions are, and must be, suggestive rather than proscriptive. We caution: the background materials on the Namibia conflict are thin and, in large part, still being assessed and while these papers are, in several cases, enormously helpful in providing presumptive answers to the most complex questions on demilitarization and disarmament, the history of the Namibia conflict remains clouded. The conflict awaits its national narrator, its true historian. It is for this reason that this paper will be accompanied, in a short time, by a comprehensive appendix -- an interview with Ambassador Chester Crocker, the most important American diplomat who experience and expertise on the conflict is recognized and whose experience of the mediation efforts on Namibia is unequalled.

Historical Background

The present boundaries of Namibia were established by the international community (primarily by European nation states) during a four year period between 1886 and 1890. At the end of that four year period, the international community recognized German sovereignty over what became known as German Southwest Africa. In 1920, as a result of the understandings reached at Versailles that brought an end to World War One, the Entente arranged for the transfer of the territory of Southwest Africa to South Africa as a League of Nations “Class C” mandate. This “Class C” mandate gave South Africa full power of administration over the territory, but required that the South African government exercise its administration for the purposes of promoting the material and moral well-being of the Southwest African peoples.⁸ After World War Two and the supersession of

⁷ Histories of Namibia, Living Through the Liberation Struggles, Colin and Susan Brown (ed.), Merlin Press, London, 2006.

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_Nations_Mandate

the League of Nations by the United Nations, South Africa refused to surrender its earlier mandate in favour of a United Nations Trusteeship that would have imposed a closer international monitoring of South African administration of the territory.

The Government of South Africa not only consistently ignored the wishes of the United Nations, it sought to annex the lands of Southwest Africa into the Union of South Africa. In 1961 the United Nations demanded that South Africa relinquish control of Southwest Africa and – in line with the prevalent surge towards decolonisation at the time – also insisted that it agree to grant eventual independence to the territory. Over a period of the next two decades, until the eventual creation of Namibia, South Africa continued to administer the territory and impose its sovereignty on its peoples. While the peoples of Southwest Africa were slow to respond politically to the South African challenge, the murmurings of discontent with South African colonial rule were widespread among the peoples of the region throughout the 1950s, until indigenous leaders were able to organize a resistance to South African rule and issue an appeal to the international community for independence. As was the case throughout Africa, Southwest Africa was viewed by the international community as a battleground during the competition between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War -- further inhibiting the move towards independence.

Since its initial geographic inception at the end of the 19th Century, Southwest Africa had been beset by discontent and uprisings and was heavily influenced by the movement of indigenous peoples seeking national identity as well as by the beginnings of widespread resistance to colonial rule. But the varying moves towards independence and identity were always short-lived -- the result of the lack of outside influences and the veritable depth, breadth and diversity of the land and its peoples. A nation of more than eleven distinct ethnic groups (of which one, the Ovambo, comprised and still comprises fully fifty percent of the population)⁹, it was not until 1957 that a full-fledged and united national resistance movement to South African hegemony was formed.¹⁰ By 1960, the Southwest Africa People's Organization had been formed, drawing heavily on its Ovambo roots and containing within its leadership a largely dominant Ovambo presence. Despite this dependence on Ovambo support, SWAPO maintained its position as a national movement by appealing to all of Southwest Africa's ethnic tribes and slowly exerted its influence as the most important national resistance umbrella organization. By 1961, the SWAPO leadership had reluctantly concluded that the prospects for success of UN imposed sanctions on South Africa would be successfully blocked by pro-South African western states in the

⁹ The numbers are based on estimates of the population according to a census conducted by South African authorities in 1961.

¹⁰ The most comprehensive account of the peace mission in southern Africa and the conflict there is contained in Chapter Ten of Herding Cats, Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World, edited by Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, Pamela Aall, and published by the United States Institute of Peace of Washington, D.C. in 1999.

Security Council. As a result, SWAPO committed itself to an extended program of armed resistance to South African suzerainty.¹¹

Despite the diversity of its land and people, the difficulties in organizing an armed resistance movement with little outside assistance (and the lack of internal financial resources), SWAPO eventually built a credible political and military organization that was able to challenge the much more heavily armed battalions of the South African army. Additionally, SWAPO leaders diligently courted outside support for their cause, enlisting the network of national liberation movements that sprang up throughout Africa in the 1960s. As a result of this successful campaign, SWAPO was recognized by the UN General Assembly in 1972 as “sole legitimate representative” of the people of Namibia. The recognition of SWAPO was not a foregone conclusion: while the organization successfully built a revolutionary and military infrastructure, its inherent weaknesses marginalized its international political program. In one sense, SWAPO was fortunate to have South Africa as an enemy, as South Africa’s internal political decision making process, and its penchant to act counter productively in the international community increasingly marginalized its political program: the South African government effectively and consistently took actions that offended the international community. For instance, efforts by the UN to appoint commissioners for Namibia in the period 1966 to 1988 were all frustrated by South Africa’s refusal to deal with them and by its high-handed manner of insulting international mediation efforts to resolve fighting in Southwest Africa. Seven commissioners were appointed during that period, South Africa recognized none of them.¹²

The Beginnings of an International Process: UNSCR 385 and the WCG

This said, the international community’s pressures on South Africa to grant Namibian independence, as well as the growing SWAPO insurgency, eventually forced South Africa to take action -- despite their best efforts to short-circuit all international initiatives to act for Namibian independence. The change came slowly and only after South Africa’s leadership calculated that its intransigent policies had no hope for success. Under the leadership of the government of Prime Minister B.J. “John” Vorster, the South African government shaped a policy designed to convince the West that it was open to change and would grant Namibian independence. Even so, the intention of the initiative was to satisfy some (but not all) UN demands and to dampen the growing criticism of South

¹¹ See, Herding Cats, Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World, Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, Pamela Aall (ed.), United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C. 1999, p. 215.

¹² www.embassyofnamibia.se/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=34&lang=en

Africa's own apartheid policies. In 1975, South African Prime Minister Vorster invited a group of leaders of Southwest Africa's eleven ethnic groups to meet with him to draft a constitution for the territory. Vorster's pledge was that the draft constitution would lead to the formation of an interim Southwest African government that would represent a broad cross-section of the territory's tribes. At the end of this process, Vorster said, Namibia would be granted independence and South African troops would be withdrawn from the territory.¹³ But Vorster's real intention was to ensure Pretoria's continued control over the direction of the Southwest African independence process and to leave South Africa in control of the territory's defence and foreign affairs infrastructure. Not surprisingly the Southwest Africa People's Organization was excluded from this process and the constitutional conference was preceded by a wave of arrests of black opposition leaders in the territories.¹⁴ The international community was not fooled: South Africa's policies were met with broad scepticism and the South African government's initiative was widely criticized.

The West, fearing that Prime Minister Vorster might implement his plan unilaterally (and thereby short-circuit their own claim to authoring a progressive "anti-colonialist" platform for Namibia), responded by passing a UN Security Council resolution that tentatively outlined a long-term but substantive peace process that would result in Namibian independence, but without threatening the continued hold of the Vorster Afrikaners government in Pretoria. The peace program initiated by Western nations and passed by the Security Council stipulated, inter alia, that South Africa must withdraw from all the territory of Southwest Africa and that, thereafter, a program for independence would be concluded. The program held that after the withdrawal of South African forces from Southwest Africa, the United Nations would supervise the holding of open elections. During and immediately following the withdrawal of South Africa forces from the territory, the UN Security Council Resolution stipulated that the Pretoria government must

(pending the transfer of power to the Namibian people), release all prisoners taken during the fight for independence and, without any preconditions, abolish all discriminatory legislation put in place against the peoples of the territory and permit the unconditional return of Namibians that had been forced into exile as a result of South African actions.¹⁵ The program was breathtakingly progressive for its time -- though future events were to cast international intentions in a

¹³ A useful discussion of the US role in conflict mediation in Namibia is contained in African Conflict Resolution, The U.S. Role in Peacemaking, David R. Smock and Chester A. Crocker, editors, USIP Press, Washington, D.C. Washington, D.C. 1995, pp. 61-65.

¹⁴ Belfiglio, Valentine. The Issue of Namibian Independence, JSTOR.
[http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0001-](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0001-9909%28197910%2978%3A313%3C507%3A%3A%3E2.0.CO%3B2-K&size=LARGE)

[9909%28197910%2978%3A313%3C507%3A%3A%3E2.0.CO%3B2-K&size=LARGE](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0001-9909%28197910%2978%3A313%3C507%3A%3A%3E2.0.CO%3B2-K&size=LARGE)

¹⁵ <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/294/73/IMG/NR029473.pdf?OpenElement>

progressively more circumspect light. Over the next years, the good intentions of the international community would be increasingly questioned by both SWAPO leaders and by anti-colonial forces in Africa.

At the end of this flurry of international activity, the South African government signalled that, despite the international pressures that had been placed on it, it was not prepared to meet the requirements of the UN Resolution. As a result, during the course of 1976, South Africa's relations with the West deteriorated markedly. South Africa's relations with the West also suffered a blow as a result of the violent Soweto uprising, which ignited popular sentiment in Europe against South Africa's racist policies. But perhaps more importantly, South Africa was at loggerheads with the West by the following year over a completely different issue – evidence of an impending nuclear test. Even the United States, South Africa's strongest defender in the international community, was beginning to feel uneasy about South Africa's internal policies. These continuing international pressures provided the West with a unique opportunity to shape a plan to resolve the Namibia question.

Against this background, in April of 1977, five western powers formed the Western Contact Group, comprised of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and West Germany. While the "WCG" was independent of the UN, it acted in coordination with the international body and with its approval. In April, after a series of meetings in South Africa, this Western Contact Group delivered a remarkably blunt message to South Africa's prime minister, telling him that the contact group nations would not support his initiative to pre-empt Namibian independence by engineering an outcome designed to entrench South African racial policies. The report of the WCG was presented to Prime Minister Vorster during a difficult and tense meeting in Pretoria. As a result of the report and growing dissatisfaction with South African policies in the international community, the South African Prime Minister realized he could no longer automatically count on the veto of Western nations to stave off UN-imposed economic sanctions against his government.¹⁶ That is, South African Prime Minister Vorster realized that his plan for Namibia was stillborn: it would not gain international approval.

While the Western Contact Group seemed poised to continue pressuring the Vorster government over the status of Namibia, the international community was far from united in its views of how to handle the South Africa situation. Continued instability in southern Africa, perceived Soviet inroads among national liberation groups on the African continent, and the continued spate of international crises that drew the Soviet Union and the West into a series of diplomatic confrontations (particularly in Africa) all conspired to dampen the

¹⁶ <http://www.klausdierks.com/Chronology/119.htm>

Western Contact Group's ardour to pressure South Africa.¹⁷ While southern Africa was an important battleground in the Cold War, it was often relegated to second class status behind a number of looming crises in Europe and, in particular, in the Middle East. As a result, the WCG's willingness to confront the South African government waned just as the prospects for progress on Namibia and host of other African issues seemed within reach of early resolution. Put more simply: just as pressure was building on Vorster to resolve the Namibia situation in SWAPO's favour, pressure was building in the West to marginalize the Namibia situation in the international community.

Constructive Diplomatic Ambiguity

The contact group's promised actions against South Africa: its highly negative report on South African intentions (delivered to the UN in 1977), its purported move to isolate South Africa in the international community, and its threat to work to impose stringent sanctions on the South African economy all proved to be hollow. The UN report was not only less critical than its authors' originally intended, it ran counter to the mood of the European public, which did not favour increased pressure on South Africa and feared a confrontation with the Soviet Union. Between the first Western Contact Group meeting with Prime Minister Vorster in early 1977 and the South African acceptance of a general framework for a settlement by South Africa in April of 1978 (which was supposed to lead to independence in December), it became clear that the Western powers did not intend to permit the UN Security Council to impose mandatory sanctions on South Africa.¹⁸

In subsequent meetings with the parties to the Namibia conflict (and following its initial presentation of its findings to South African Prime Minister Vorster), the Western Contact Group began to weaken the principles of Security Council resolution 385. The principles of the initial resolution were clear: South African forces would withdraw from Namibia, the UN would establish its control of the territory in order to conduct and supervise free elections, and finally, (prior to the transfer of power), all political prisoners would be released.¹⁹ The Western Contract Group also laid out a detailed settlement plan for the conflict. While the understandings between the WCG and the Vorster government were supposed to have been established in a series of informal discussions and exchanges, the resulting program was purposely ambiguous, with the leaders of the WCG shaping a report that was deliberately imprecise. The leaders of the WCG intentionally blurred the issues on Namibian independence -- that is, they adopted

¹⁷ See, Disengagement from Southwest Africa, Prospects for Peace in Angola and Namibia, ed. By Owen Ellison Kahn, Transaction Publishers, London, pp. 69-73.

¹⁸http://72.14.209.104/search?q=cache:zwVURSKqwcAJ:www.publicadministrationnetbase.com/books/1371/DKE265_CH05.pdf+SWAPO,+1988+demilitarization&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=7

¹⁹ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/namibia.htm>

a position of “constructive diplomatic ambiguity” -- precisely because they believed it would eventually force the parties towards what amounted to a shift towards the South African position -- a proposal that reflected the Western Contact Group’s growing fear that a “tilt” towards SWAPO would, in effect, reward the Soviet Union’s proxies on the African continent.²⁰

The situation was further complicated by the ambiguity of the political position of the Contact Group itself. Very often, officials and diplomats of the Contact Group played into and gave currency to the South African language of demonisation of SWAPO -- describing them as both "terrorists" and "Marxists." This tendency, pronounced at times, inhibited the Contact Group from speaking directly with those they needed to talk with: they feared speaking with terrorists. This reflected a sense of western governments but not necessarily their constituents - that South Africa "shared our values." Coupled with this was the failure by the Contact Group in the context of the demonising discourse of South Africa to object to South Africa's attempt to construct a pro-Western moderate government in Windhoek -- despite its transparent artificiality.

As a result of this deliberate ambiguity, subsequent UN Resolutions did not require South African armed forces to withdraw from Namibia. Instead, the South African military was required to be confined to their bases during the election process -- which marked a significant shift in the original UN plan. The new program called for the territory to be under the control of the UN during the elections. The new program seemed rational, but in effect the administration and management of the election process was placed in the hands of South Africa and overseen by a South African appointed administrator general: Louis Pienaar. As a result of this ambiguity, and the retreat of the WCG from its original principles, prime responsibility for law and order did not lie with the UN (as stipulated in SCR 385), but with the existing Southwest African police under the supervision of the administrator general. The UN was relegated to a secondary role. The United Nation’s Special Representative for Namibia, Martti Ahtisaari, was given responsibility for monitoring the outcome of the elections with the assistance of his staff and a contested, and recently mandated, United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG). The extent of practical UN control over this ambiguously defined process was little more than the doubtful sanction of pronouncing on whether or not the elections had been correctly mounted.

The reason for this shift in emphasis and for the transformation of the UN role was not simply the unwillingness of the WCG to confront the Vorster government. While each of the parties to the conflict -- South Africa, SWAPO, and in the WCG -- was pursuing its own agenda, SWAPO itself carried little weight. While the organization can be rightly said to have represented a significant and credible force inside of Namibia, it had failed to buttress its standing inside of its own territory by the recruitment of strong Western support.

²⁰ <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1977/1977-1.htm>

Its diplomatic activity was virtually non-existent. Then too, the Western powers were not just disinterested mediators – the Western Contact Group was determined to ensure that the future government of Namibia would be “moderate,” pro-western, pro-capitalist, and above all, sympathetic to their economic and strategic interests in Southwest Africa. In practice, the Western Contact Group need not have worried. SWAPO was essentially a nationalist movement: its leaders made little effort then, or later, to protect its professed socialist programme for Namibia’s post-independence development.²¹ In effect, the Western Contact Group’s political goals proved to be closer to those of South Africa, despite the fact that the West did not wish to be seen as endorsing a political settlement in Southwest Africa that would establish South Africa’s formula of white domination effected through ethnic separation.

The use of constructive ambiguity in international diplomacy on the Namibia conflict was deliberate and reflected an inability of the international community to articulate a coherent political process. Several examples will suffice. Resolution 435 refers to “the Whole of Namibia” without specifying the important commercial and naval port of Walvis Bay in its definition. South Africa wished to retain the port, while SWAPO would have rejected any settlement that excluded it. Other initiatives stated that SWAPO must be disarmed -- but failed to mention when, or by whom. Still other initiatives talked of the “eventual” withdrawal of South African forces, but again failed to say when the forces would be withdrawn. Such ambiguities continued even until the end of the conflict. The most important study of the conflict’s resolution -- the World Bank’s Case Studies in War-To-Peace Transition (1996) -- notes: “No demobilization and reintegration program (DRP) existed to provide short- to medium-term assistance to ex-combatants after discharge” -- a shocking admission from the international community whose responsibilities, at least in this conflict, seem surprisingly slipshod.

In an area of such unrest, and given such purposeful ambiguity, these uncertainties lay about much as unexploded mines, waiting for the slightest bit of pressure to be detonated.²² Other gaps were equally significant: SCR 435 failed to specify how the constitution would be ratified, and was silent on the issue of how a government would be formed, or whether further elections would be necessary to choose the new government. The resolution was imprecise on what discriminatory legislation would be required. Such ambiguity was used by all parties to paper over the most controversial issues. In the name of ending conflict, this constructive ambiguity actually sowed fear, particularly among the Namibian nationalist movement. The greatest fear, as it turned out, was over a UN

²¹ Disengagement from Southwest Africa, pp. 65-67. The misunderstanding of SWAPO’s ideological commitments were of a piece with the West’s misunderstandings of Cuba’s role in Southwest Africa. Castro never considered himself a surrogate for the Soviet Union in the region. A full discussion of this complex political situation is included in an essay on the subject by Colin Legum, “Gorbachev’s Policies on Southern Africa,” in Disengagement from Southwest Africa.

²²<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/368/80/IMG/NR036880.pdf?OpenElement>

requirement that SWAPO lay down its arms as a condition for negotiating a final settlement. SWAPO simply refused -- over a period of two decades -- to accede to this international demand until, as a result of a final political settlement, the demand was dropped and then, revived, though only after it was clear that Namibia itself would be cleared of South African forces. In the end, ironically, SWAPO's mistrust of the international community (and of the international community's demand for disarmament) was matched by South Africa's mistrust of the international community -- and their demand for South African military withdrawal (even though the international community stipulated that South African units could remain *in situ during Namibia's transition to independence*).

“Constructive Ambiguity” vs. “Constructive Engagement”

We note that what critics of the American initiated search for peace in the Reagan era -- what we have called “constructive diplomatic ambiguity,” was viewed more positively by diplomats in the Reagan administration. Far from being ambiguous, they believed, the policy that they followed was designed to reassure South Africa that it had much to gain from a withdrawal from Namibia. South Africa, they believed, thought of itself as beset by enemies on all sides -- creating a defensive psychology.²³ The only way to ease these fears, the Reagan administration believed, was to engage the South African government in direct talks on a regional peace agreement -- and that meant engaging the South African government diplomatically. But such engagement, what Reagan administration officials called “constructive engagement” -- and its critics called “appeasement of the apartheid government” -- came at a very high price: a loss of prestige, particularly among African nations that looked on South Africa as a pariah state, and vulnerability to public critics who saw such engagement as indirect support for the racist nature of the Pretoria government. Indeed, the Reagan administration's political calculations were domestic as well as foreign -- and included a careful study of the likely fall-out among domestic constituents who support tougher action in Africa.

Even so, the program of “constructive engagement” went forward -- though its exact means of implementation and its goals remained oddly ambiguous. The Reagan administration was loathe to announce that it was seeking a regional solution to ease South African fears (as this would only reinforce the views of domestic critics) and studiously maintained a go-slow diplomatic process in order not to tip its hand on how it intended to both assuage the South African government and move towards Namibian independence -- as this would certainly have allowed even its adversaries to provide counter-moves to its diplomatic initiatives. Still, in the early days of the administration, a study of the Southwest

²³ See, Herdin Cats, “The U.S. Decision to Engage: 1981,” Chester Crocker, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999, pp. 214-215.

Africa situation convinced the new State Department that the Carter policy of publicly castigating the Pretoria government was not working. Pretoria would have to be engaged.

Faced with this regional legacy, the incoming Reagan team saw three options: (1) to continue with the Namibia-only approach, recognizing its limited prospects but judging that the continuing process would buy time and avoid trouble with our Contact Group allies and African partners; (2) to downgrade South African diplomacy and pull in our horns, thus avoiding the domestic grief visited on previous administrations over African issues; or (3) to restructure the negotiations fundamentally to incorporate the Angolan factor.²⁴

The Reagan administration chose to engage South Africa (“constructively,” they say, “ambiguously” its critics say) and approach the Namibia problem as a regional issue. In retrospect, the policy seems to have been vindicated: Namibia gained its independence, Cuban troops left Angola, and apartheid ended in South Africa. Not surprisingly, the Reagan administration took credit for this outcome. But no one in 1981 could have, or would have, predicted this result. In many respects, the Namibia resolution was, in fact, much like the resolution of the Afghanistan conflict: the United States trumpeted its support for the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan as decisive in that conflict -- Russian officials disagree: attributing their withdrawal to the collapse of the Soviet empire. So too, by the mid-1980s (at the earliest), Cuba began to look for a way out of Angola -- and Cuban officials now claim that the United States provided the necessary mediation to make that possible. In either case, the historical debate, while interesting, is likely to remain unresolved: a puzzle for historians to unwrap for the next decades. For our purposes, it is simply important to note that whether or not we accept that the United States engaged “ambiguously” or “constructively,” its policies had a decided impact on-the-ground in the region. At least initially, the engagement initiated by the Reagan administration had a decided negative impact on the region’s players -- and particularly on SWAPO.

SWAPO’s Disarmament Fears

The changes erupting in South West Africa, the failure of the Western Contact Group to pressure South Africa -- as well as significant pressures inside of South Africa itself -- all contributed to SWAPO’s feelings of vulnerability during the late 1970s. While SWAPO had successfully built a workable and credible political movement in Southwest Africa, the movement’s military arm remained an irregular and inconsistently successful military force without the resources available to counter the enormous conventional military power of the South

²⁴ Ibid., p. 215.

African nation state. SWAPO's lack of resources and its inability to purchase and import heavy weapons meant the SWAPO could not exact the kinds of military punishment on South African forces that would keep its cause highlighted in the international arena or that would convince the Western powers that it could exact punishment for their failure to pressure the apartheid regime. Nor did SWAPO trust the apparent decision of the Western Contact Group of having the Namibia peace process left in the hands of the South Africans rather than the United Nations. The idea that only a UN Special Representative could deem an election "unfair" seemed to the SWAPO leadership as unlikely to serve its political needs once South Africa was able to use its military strength to influence the facts on the ground in Namibia. SWAPO also believed that the policy of constructive ambiguity actually worked in South Africa's favour, as the policy failed to provide a specific mechanism for resolving differences and disputes between the UN Special Representative and South Africa's administrator general.²⁵

More serious was the uncertainty created by the Western Contact Groups' acceptance of South African troops remaining in situ during the transition – an issue SWAPO rejected outright. Western compromises that acceded to South African wishes (of confining South African troops to two bases in Namibia, while limiting their numbers), did little to mitigate SWAPO fears that South Africa would remain in a position to attack SWAPO forces. Most importantly, acceptance of the United Nations resolution had the practical implication of confining SWAPO military units to their bases in Angola; these units could return to Southwest Africa to participate in internationally mandated elections, but only after they had been disarmed. For the leadership of the Southwest Africa People's Organization, this final requirement -- of disarmament prior to their return to their native land -- was viewed as being tantamount to their surrender: SWAPO units would return to Namibia disarmed to face a well-armed South African military force. Moreover, the UN proposal that a 7500 person UNTAG military force to monitor both SWAPO and South African militaries had been refused -- by the South African government. The misgivings created by the constructive ambiguity of the Western Contact Group's proposals and the deteriorating political and military situation in Southwest Africa intensified the pervasive mistrust of the international community among the SWAPO leadership.

But SWAPO was not the only party to the conflict that looked suspiciously at the UN's policy of constructive ambiguity. By 1978, the situation in Southwest Africa was becoming a source of growing discord inside Prime Minister Vorster's cabinet. The more intransigent of Vorster's cabinet colleagues calculated that any process that led to a SWAPO victory in elections in Southwest Africa would boost the morale and strengthen the political position of the banned African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa. Yet, Vorster's colleagues were

²⁵ Disengagement from Southwest Africa, pp. 134-137. A comprehensive and detailed political history of the Southwest Africa Peoples Organization has yet to be written on this period, but this short narrative history provides the best account of this period.

uncertain about what steps to take in responding to the UN proposal. The South African leadership knew that outright repudiation of the Western Contact Group's mediation would further isolate South Africa, jeopardising the key protective wall of Western vetoes in the Security Council. South Africa had agreed to the implementation of SCR 435 (which superseded earlier resolutions and reflected the updated Western Contact Group's and Secretary General's proposal) but there were hidden motives at work: within ten days of formally accepting the initiative, South Africa launched an attack on SWAPO's camp at Cassinga, Angola killing 600 and wounding 400.²⁶

The initial agreement with, and subsequent defiance of, Security Council Resolution 435 effectively brought the political process to an end. SWAPO angrily withdrew from the negotiations. It is true that SWAPO was consequently reengaged by the Western mediators by explicit inclusion of Walvis Bay as a part of the territory, but this only caused South Africa to then follow SWAPO's lead -- and also break off negotiations. Perhaps as a result of this, in 1979, new British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher presented a more sympathetic approach to the situation in South Africa. The British veto on the Security Council seemed secure, and the prospects of a Republican win in the US elections in 1981 suggested that the winds of hostility towards South Africa were changing. In the South African optic, the more favourable prospects argued for maintaining the appearance of engagement with the Western Contact Group, while blocking progress by other means.²⁷

Meanwhile, Robert Mugabe's sweeping victory in Zimbabwe's elections preceding that nation's independence shocked South Africa's leadership. South Africa's leaders projected the results in Zimbabwe to future elections in Namibia, foreseeing a sweeping victory for SWAPO. These were dangerous signs that the ANC was also likely to be the recipients of mass popular support.²⁸ South Africa's growing political anxiety was mitigated, however, in early 1981 with the arrival of the Reagan Administration. Secretary of State-designate Alexander Haig gave strong hints in his confirmation hearings that there would be less pressure on Pretoria over Namibia. Haig argued the U.S. should not jeopardise the interests of those who share U.S. values of strategic stability and he included African allies. Chester Crocker, the new Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, had already outlined a less confrontational strategy toward South Africa. His new policy of "constructive engagement" stressed the durability of the regime in Pretoria, the limits of US capability to influence it, and the need to work with its leaders to make that influence effective -- a position he continued to espouse throughout his career as a diplomat.²⁹ Crocker³⁰ also ruled out economic

²⁶ Purkitt, Helen E. A Problem Centered Approach for Understanding Foreign Policy.
http://72.14.209.104/search?q=cache:zwVURSKqwcAJ:www.publicadministrationetbase.com/bo oks/1371/DKE265_CH05.pdf+SWAPO,+1988,+demilitarization&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=7

²⁷ <http://www.margareththatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=104122>

²⁸ <http://www.rhodesia.nl/quartz.htm>

²⁹ See, Herding Cats, Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World, pp. 9-11.

sanctions, the policy tool viewed by South Africa's rulers as the greatest threat to their continued survival.³¹

In seeking to accommodate South African objections to a Namibia settlement, the Reagan Administration insisted that South Africa's withdrawal from Namibia could only occur with parallel Cuban withdrawal from Angola. Restraining Soviet and Cuban interests in Southern Africa played well in U.S. domestic politics, but not among its allies in the Western Contact Group, who saw this unnecessary linkage as a gift to South African procrastination. Their opposition led to the end of the Western Contact Group and, after 1982, international policy on Namibia effectively became a US diplomatic venture.³² It took five more years for there to be any diplomatic progress in western Africa -- which began again only in 1987, the year the Soviet Union withdrew its forces from Afghanistan. Independence in Namibia, when it was ultimately achieved in 1990, was viewed as a U.S. diplomatic achievement. It is argued, however, that the Soviet and Cuban reassessment of the non-viability of the war in Angola – in light of the Soviet's own troubles in Afghanistan – was the real trigger to the possibility of a settlement.

One lesson from the Namibia experience is that constructive engagement with the South African government yielded few results as long as South Africa remained unwilling to see their political opponents as equal partners in a political process. And so long as that was the case, Western governments' were willing to protect South African interests in the United Nations. This, in turn, under girded the South African government's willingness to obstruct and delay the international community's search for a diplomatic resolution of the conflict. Ultimately South Africa engaged politically only when it had exhausted its military options; that is, when it failed to win an outright military victory.³³ The albatross carried by the U.S. (linking South African withdrawal from Namibia to Cuban withdrawal from Angola), collapsed when the Soviet Union could no longer maintain its presence as an ally of western African nations. When the Soviets could no longer maintain their presence in Western Africa, the United States could no longer maintain their moral reason for the support of a purely apartheid regime in South Africa -- and the conflicts that had plagued western Africa became resolvable.

Constructive ambiguity was used in the Namibia process in good faith -- because parties to the process believed that constructive ambiguity could be used to paper over differences that would bring an end to the process itself. But constructive

³⁰ As noted: Conflicts Forum intends to publish a separate and detailed monograph on the Namibia process which will feature a comprehensive interview with Ambassador Crocker.

³¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chester_A._Crocker

³² Klug, Heinz. Constituting Democracy: Law, Globalism, and South Africa's Political Reconstruction <http://books.google.com/books?id=gAReHsFzx8UC&pg=RA1-PA65&lpg=RA1-PA65&dq=%22the+1982+constitutional+principles%22&source=web&ots=jWddgVSakx&sig=LANC7gkt6Y95Ie9mj7sXbDzvfrM#PRA1-PA65,M1>

³³ The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. <http://www.rhodesia.nl/cuito.htm>

ambiguity tended to exacerbate rather than provide creative relief from intransigent political issues. Constructive ambiguity was used to obscure fundamental disagreements and did little to actually resolve them. Moreover, in the Namibian example, the ambiguity not only postponed an eventual resolution of the Southwest Africa conflict, the policy of purposeful ambiguity actually fuelled a continuation and, in some cases, an escalation of the fighting. The use of constructive ambiguity can be defended on the ground that it serves as a tool that “triggers” a process (once a process of mediation begins, for instance, it can develop a momentum that will carry the parties through various disagreements). But, ambiguities that touch on areas of security are another matter. Security issues can unexpectedly explode unless a framework of understandings and a mechanism to resolve disputes is in place. That is to say: constructive ambiguity on security issues tends to obscure and undermine a political process -- not help in forwarding it.

Disarmament and Ambiguity

In the case of the conflict in Namibia, the purposeful adoption of constructive ambiguity in the political realm extended into the military and security realm. This had unfortunate consequences. For the leadership of SWAPO, the ambiguity in the international community’s call for disarmament fuelled suspicions about the international community’s true intentions. SWAPO wanted to know how they would be disarmed and by whom; they wanted to know where the South African forces would be at the end of the conflict, in what circumstances they would withdraw to South Africa, when their militias would be confined, to what bases, under what circumstances, and under whose control. Above all, the SWAPO militia senior leadership wanted guarantees that they would be protected if the South Africans launched a surprise attack. How would they be defended and by whom? And if attacked what recourse would they have? Who would hear their grievances, and how would these grievances be resolved? All of these details required clarification that was not available and not detailed by the international community. Nor would the Western Contact Group provide answers to these questions -- as it seemed to them that the questions implied a lack of trust in the international community.

These emotive issues became a source of continuing suspicion for all of the parties to the conflict. In any process, it needs to be understood that ambiguity is a tool and not a convenience. As an agreement approaches implementation its ambiguities must be progressively dispelled. In the case of the Namibia negotiations the ambiguities of the negotiating process more often became more entrenched. This was the case during the period from 1978 to 1979.³⁴ The call for

³⁴<http://72.14.209.104/search?q=cache:Zx3xNgQpaHoJ:www.iss.co.za/pubs/papers/120/Paper120.pdf+SWAPO+disarmament+problems&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=1>

the disarmament of SWAPO also contained a psychological component that was ignored by the international community. The psychology of armed groups that have been exposed to prolonged conflict is such that they are not easily persuaded to put down their weapons unless they can receive guarantees of their safety. This is because the effect of a prolonged conflict is profound and enduring. Communities, as well as individuals, experience trauma. The loss of friends and relatives, the experience of humiliation and the loss of human expectations produce overwhelming feelings of aggression that last for many years. For those who have been engaged in conflict over a prolonged period disarmament seems to represent a betrayal of those who have sacrificed and died in a conflict. This was true for those SWAPO fighters who survived the Namibia conflict.³⁵

Another aspect of the psychology that applies in the case of Namibia is the impact of colonialism and racism on those who have established a resistance movement - particularly a resistance movement in a colonial society. The SWAPO leadership was particularly sensitive to their role as a resistance movement in a black nation, established to aggressively confront a white Western-allied colonial movement. Frantz Fanon in Black Skin, White Masks³⁶ describes how “every colonised people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural creativity finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation...the colonised is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.”³⁷ It is not hard to see how, in the case of Namibia, the international mediators -- the Western Contact Group -- was seen by SWAPO as part of a colonial program that insisted on asserting its cultural superiority by demanding disarmament without a commensurate disarmament of their (white) adversary.

That we in the West see such issues of disarmament and demobilization as mere “technical issues” for security experts to resolve suggests that we are not free from these unconscious colonial attitudes. It is not that de-escalation of violence is wrong; it is the assumption that once a political program is in place we believe that the underlying psychology can be ignored. Professor Mats Berdal in his Adelphi paper examines attempts since 1989 to disarm and demobilise guerrilla and government forces after prolonged periods of internal conflict.³⁸ Berdal cautions against simplistic and “technical” assessments of the problems involved. He argues that disarmament and demobilisation processes “depend on the extent

³⁵ The international community only learned this belatedly in the Namibia conflict, as the Namibian Council of Churches implemented a reintegration support and employment program after independence in recognition of the specific difficulties encountered by returning SWAPO cadre. The full program involved not only combatants, but non-combatants -- families and communities in which combatants settle. See “The Impact of Reintegration Efforts,” in Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition, p. 185.

³⁶ Black Skin, White Masks, Frantz Fanon, Pluto Press, New York, 1986.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

³⁸ Adelphi Paper 303, 1 August 1996, IISS London.

to which [they] go hand in hand with parallel efforts of political and economic reconstruction aimed at resolving or ameliorating as far as possible, the root causes of conflict.”³⁹

Neither in the case of Namibia, nor in the Lebanese context, has any thought been given to how to address the psychological problems associated with de-escalation and demilitarization. Then too, as in many cases in Africa, the “colonial context” of the technical problem of de-escalation and demilitarization has been largely ignored. That such psychological components need to be considered in an attempt to mediate a robust security program might seem to be intangible -- but such considerations are essential. Eventually, in the Namibia situation, mediators began to understand SWAPO’s need for having their fighters continually reassured that their need for restitution and their sacrifices be addressed. International efforts to explain what was happening and why, and detailed security provisions and guarantees were eventually forthcoming: but only after international mediators understood the very real trauma that SWAPO fighters had undergone through two decades of conflict. So too, in Lebanon, international mediators are beginning to understand the importance of the psychological component of demilitarization. Hezbollah’s immediate and effective provision of food and financial assistance to the Lebanese victims in the aftermath of the 2006 war in Lebanon is a model of good practice of the type that the international community might well adopt in post-conflict situations to ameliorate the traumatic after-effects of large-scale displacements.⁴⁰

Demobilisation and Demilitarization in Southwest Africa

The creation of a new security structure for Namibia -- which took place at the end of the civil conflict -- embodied the integration of ethnic units supported by South Africa into existing SWAPO cadres, as well as the integration of SWAPO cadres into a new national security establishment.⁴¹ The newly created Namibian military forces that resulted represented the melding of a very small number of South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF) units into the former SWAPO militias -- that is, the Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). The British government was given responsibility for formulating the force integration plan and began training the National Defence Forces, which consisted of five battalions of integrated forces from the two separate militias.⁴² The Kenyan military also assisted with the force integration. While South Africa attempted to prevent SWAPO from gaining prevalence in the new Namibian Defence Force, their efforts proved futile, as the international community successfully short-

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,209340,00.html>

⁴¹ Case Studies in War-to Peace Transition, pp. 137-142.

⁴² Herding Cats, pp. 224-225.

circuited South Africa's last-minute attempts to derail a final "demobilization and reinsertion" agreement.⁴³

It is important to note that, in the final months of negotiation over the resolution of the Namibia conflict, both the international community (in the form of the Western Contract Group, but also with the cooperation of the United Nations) and the Government of South Africa, had quietly dropped their demand for SWAPO's disarmament. Instead, as was clearly understood by both sides, SWAPO forces in Angola would agree to lay down their arms once South African forces had withdrawn from Namibia. SWAPO cadre would then be "reintegrated" into a national force: it was understood that "disarmament" would be a part of a program of "demilitarization" but also of "remilitarization" -- and SWAPO cadre would continue to be treated as the People's Liberation Army of Namibia.⁴⁴

The United Nations was given a principle role in the demilitarization process to ensure its fairness, but SWAPO senior commanders were allowed as monitors of the process at every step. Those SWAPO cadre, many of them living in Angola, were allowed to be repatriated to Namibia, but only after the successful conclusion of free elections, in which the SWAPO leadership won 57 percent of the vote -- and so were given the responsibility of forming a government. More specifically, the United Nations formed a United Nations Transitory Assistance Group to Namibia (UNTAG) comprised of 8000 personnel -- including 2000 civilians, 1500 police and 2500 military officers and enlisted men and women. The military units were responsible for security in Namibia. South Africa's forces were required to withdraw from the country, as SWAPO forces were successively "discharged," "repatriated," "received," "registered" "reinserted" and then "reintegrated" into a new national military force.⁴⁵ A similar, and parallel process was followed with those indigenous personnel who worked with the South African forces, but it success proved illusory. The demobilization process for South Africa paramilitary forces proved impossible to implement and enforce. South African officials purposely attempted to circumvent U.N intentions and the UN Security Council was forced to pass an implementing and enforcing resolution demanding the disbandment of South African supported units.⁴⁶ As the case study on the post-conflict situation noted:

The South African-sponsored paramilitary force Koevoet, an estimated 3000 strong, was ostensibly transferred from SWAFT to the police as a

⁴³ Case Studies of War-to-Peace Transition, at Namibia, Beyond Transition, The World Bank, Washington, D.C, 1996, pp. 126-132.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 138-139.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 138-142. The plan for the construction of a Namibian national force comprised of SWAPO fighters that had thus been "reinserted" and "reintegrated" was, UNTAG officials were to later admit, rather haphazard. Even SWAPO officials believed that once the political conflict had ended, the reintegration of their own cadre into a national army would proceed smoothly and with few difficulties.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 141.

counterinsurgency force prior to the implementation of Resolution 435. Koevoet units continued to patrol in armoured vehicles and heavily armed convoys in the northern region and were violent, disruptive, and repressive until the Security Council passed a resolution (No. 640) in September 1989 demanding their disbandment under UNTAG supervision; 1200 Koevoet were promptly demobilized in September 1989, and a further 400 followed on October 30, 1989. These demobilized forces were free to roam the sensitive areas near the northern border and were accused of violent intimidation of SWAPO sympathizers and returnees. After independence, fearing retaliation, many departed for South Africa.⁴⁷

The Namibia case shows that the successful construction of post-conflict military structures requires a carefully managed political process to succeed -- even when the international community establishes an agreed-upon framework for reintegration. As the World Bank Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition notes: even when a war ends with a clear political victor (as was the case in the Namibia conflict), national reconciliation needs to be actively promoted, and the needs of the losers must be accommodated to avoid further distrust and discontent. In other words, the created national security structures need to enjoy political credibility and legitimacy beyond mere competence in military skills. In the case of Namibia, the success of the “reinsertion” and “reintegration” process gained its credibility when the international community placed the process in the hands of Namibia’s National Council of Churches -- a body widely respected in Namibian society, and thought to be above the conflict by the vast majority of Namibia’s peoples. The process thereby enjoyed the support of the Namibian population. The World Bank study adds that in a fragile society such as Namibia’s, failure to take into account the needs of different ethnic groups can seriously endanger the success of any intervention.⁴⁸

Similar considerations allowed Professor Berdal to suggest that “coercive disarmament in the context of an internal conflict carries considerable risks.” He went on to note that “grievances persist after the formal end to hostilities and, crucially, they continue to exert a profound influence on the politics and processes of peacebuilding.”⁴⁹ Professor Berdal might have added “vulnerability” to “grievance” as a key factor in helping to resolve a conflict -- as anyone who has had experience of civil conflict can attest. Professor Berdal argues that his studies of conflict show that the success of disarmament and demobilisation programmes depend on the extent to which they go hand in hand with parallel efforts of well-managed political and economic reconstruction, which are aimed at resolving the root causes of conflict. In the case of SWAPO, progress on security issues -- and final resolution of them -- could only go forward once SWAPO leaders were convinced that their cadres would no longer be vulnerable to attack by South

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 141.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 143-153.

⁴⁹ Adelphi Paper 303

African or indigenous South African-sponsored military forces. That is to say, SWAPO only agreed to disarmament when disarming them no longer left them vulnerable to attack.

Even so, the “reinsertion” and “reintegration” programs of the United Nations in the Namibia case provide a needed model for demilitarization that can be used in future conflicts. Once a political agreement is reached, the international community needs to understand that a conflict has not ended: former combatants require a robust program of continuing social and economic reintegration that will build trust -- and security. In the case of Namibia, the international community not only rebuilt Namibia’s national army out of the core of SWAPO militias, it attempted to rebuild the nation’s infrastructure using SWAPO’s considerable personnel resources. A major portion of skilled returnees from Angola were absorbed into the public sector. A Tripartite Military Integration Committee was established under the chairmanship of UNTAG to develop the Namibian Army and a newly integrated Namibian Defence Force was established with training help from British and Kenyan military forces.⁵⁰

Disarmament and Demilitarization Lessons from Namibia

The shortcomings of the international process in resolving the Namibia conflict (the penchant to adopt a strategy of constructive ambiguity being the most obvious) are known to the international community and can be applied, in general, across conflicts from southern Asia to the Middle East. For our purposes, some general conclusions can be drawn for the conflict in southern Lebanon, though only tentatively -- as the two conflicts (between SWAPO and South Africa, and Hezbollah and Israel) are quite different. Still, some general observations seem in order. Hezbollah, like SWAPO, is not a defeated military movement. On the contrary, like SWAPO it is ascendant both in military and political terms. Even the most ardent Western supporters who favour the disarming of Hezbollah would agree with Professor Berdal’s comment that the risk of coercive disarmament is too great and too likely to fail -- apart from the obvious fact that there is no one to achieve it in the wake of Israel’s military failure during the summer of 2006. Disarming Hezbollah now, through a consent agreement -- a simple adherence to a UN resolution (such as UN Resolution 1559) -- is simply not possible and it seems unlikely at the time of this writing. That is to say, no matter what the international community may demand, Hezbollah will not voluntarily give up its weapons, particularly in the face of continuing arming of its adversaries, either in Israel or among its competitor parties in Lebanon. Professor Berdal suggests, rather, that the adoption of a consent-based strategy leading to demilitarization is essential if the underlying vulnerabilities and grievances that were a cause of conflict in the first place are not to resurface.

⁵⁰ Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition, pp. 148-149.

It is in this context that we should reflect on current U.S. and French policies in Lebanon in an attempt to determine whether they will, in fact, succeed; that is, whether they are likely to facilitate conditions for a consensual integration of Lebanese forces into a new security architecture. In determining the answer to this question, we must note that Lebanon does not elect governments in the Western sense – it depends, rather, on a consensual system of governance in which political movements and currents are given veto power over each other. The principal four confessional groups stumble along with their legs bound together by the agreed upon Taif Accords that institutionalize a power-sharing system. The Lebanese elect power-sharing arrangements of varying complexity – rather than governments. Attempts to try to isolate one element of this system will only serve to alienate another. As in Namibia, where efforts to marginalise the largest ethnic group – the Ovambo, the main supporters of SWAPO – failed, so too any effort to marginalize the plurality ethnic group in Lebanon -- the Shia -- are fated to fail. In Namibia it was to be two decades before South Africa and the United States could come to terms with the reality that future security structures of the new state would be constructed, indeed must be constructed, around the militia of SWAPO.

A consensual outcome in Lebanon would need to begin by defining Lebanese national security objectives in ways that address the vulnerabilities of the respective confessional groups rather than defining external threats. It would require the agreement, at minimum, of the four principal confessional groups (the Shia, the Sunnah, the Druze and the Christians) to new security structures and forces. The new forces would have to be disengaged from their earlier sectional attachments and histories; and their operational policies and conduct would have to be overseen by a monitoring body that is viewed as representative of the community. To achieve such agreement in any divided society is ambitious; but to achieve it at a time when the West and other Arab actors are polarizing the politics of Lebanon in pursuit of their own strategic agendas, may prove impossible. Finally, what needs to be done eventually and inevitably -- and that was done eventually and inevitably in the case of Namibia -- must needs be done in Lebanon: the international community must abandon the ideal and adopt the real. Hezbollah will not disarm in the face of its enemies, anymore than SWAPO did throughout its existence. But Hezbollah, like SWAPO, will engage in a political process that is transparent and honest, and that holds out the hope that, at its conclusion, its existence as a political movement will be guaranteed and that the sacrifices of its cadre will be recognized and rewarded.

Appendix One

A Modern History of the Namibia Conflict

-- In 1966, the Southwest Africa People's Organization -- SWAPO -- began guerrilla attacks on South Africa, infiltrating the territory from bases in Zambia. SWAPO established bases in the southern Angola after 1975. Hostilities intensified Ovamboland. In a 1971 advisory opinion, the International Court of Justice upheld UN authority over Namibia, determining that the South African presence in Namibia was illegal and that South Africa must withdraw its administration from Namibia.

-- In 1977, Western members of the United Nations Security Council including Canada, France, West Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States -- known as the Western Contact Group -- launched a joint diplomatic effort to bring an acceptable transition to independence for Namibia. Their efforts led to the presentation in April 1978 of Security Council Resolution 435 for settling the Namibian problem. The proposal worked out after lengthy consultations with South Africa and the front-line states of Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, SWAPO, UN officials and the members of the Western Contact Group. The agreement called for the holding of elections in Namibia under UN supervision and control, the cessation of all hostile acts by all parties, and restrictions on the activities of South African and Namibian military, paramilitary, and police.

-- South Africa agreed to cooperate in achieving the implementation of Resolution 435. Nonetheless, in December 1978, in defiance of the UN proposal, it unilaterally held elections in Namibia which were boycotted by SWAPO and a few other political parties. South Africa continued to administer Namibia through its a multiracial coalition. Negotiations after 1978 focused on issues such as supervision of elections connected with implementation of the UN Plan.

-- In the 1966 to 1988 period, seven UN Commissioners for Namibia were appointed. South Africa refused to recognize any of these United Nations appointees. Nevertheless discussions proceeded with UN Commissioner Martti Ahtisaari who played a key role in getting the Constitutional Principles agreed to in 1982 by the front-line states, SWAPO, and the Western Contact Group. This agreement created the framework for Namibia's democratic constitution.

-- The US Government's role as mediator was both critical and disputed throughout the period, one example being the intense efforts in 1984 to obtain withdrawal of the South African Defense Forces from southern Angola. This "Constructive Engagement" by US diplomatic interests was viewed negatively by those who supported internationally recognized independence, while to others US policy seemed to be aimed more towards restraining Soviet-Cuban influence in Angola and linking that to the issue of Namibian independence.

-- In addition, US moves seemed to encourage the South Africans to delay independence by taking initiatives that would keep the Soviets-Cubans in Angola, such as dominating large tracts of southern Angola militarily while at the same time providing surrogate forces for the Angolan opposition movement, UNITA, under Jonas Savimbi. Finally, in 1987 (when prospects for Namibian independence seemed to be improving), the seventh UN Commissioner for Namibia Bernt Carlsson was appointed. Upon South Africa's relinquishing control of Namibia, Commissioner Carlsson's role would be to administer the country, formulate its framework constitution, and organize free and fair elections based on a non-racial universal franchise.

-- In May 1988, a US mediation team – headed by Chester A. Crocker, US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs – brought negotiators from Angola, Cuba, and South Africa, and observers from the Soviet Union together in London. Intense diplomatic maneuvering characterized the next 7 months, as the parties worked out agreements to bring peace to the region and make possible the implementation of UNSCR 435. At the Reagan/Gorbachev summit on September 29, 1988 it was agreed that Cuban troops would be withdrawn from Angola, and Soviet military aid would cease, as soon as South Africa withdrew from Namibia. Agreements to give effect to these decisions were drawn up for signature at UN headquarters in New York in December 1988. Cuba, South Africa, and the People's Republic of Angola agreed to a total Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola.

-- This agreement known as the Brazzaville Protocol established a Joint Monitoring Commission (JMC), with the United States and the Soviet Union as observers, to oversee implementation of the accords. A bilateral agreement between Cuba and Angola was signed at UN headquarters in on December 22, 1988. On the same day, a tripartite agreement between Angola, Cuba and South Africa was signed whereby South Africa agreed to hand control of Namibia to the United Nations. Implementation of UNSCR 435 officially started on April 1, 1989, when the South African-appointed Administrator General, Louis Pienaar, began the territory's transition to independence. Former UN Commissioner Martti Ahtisaari arrived in Windhoek in April 1989 to head the UN Transition Assistance Groups observer mission.

-- The transition got off to a shaky start because, contrary to SWAPO President Sam Nujoma's written assurances to the UN Secretary General to abide by a cease-fire and repatriate only unarmed Namibians, it was alleged that approximately 2,000 armed members of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) SWAPO's military wing, crossed the border from Angola in an apparent attempt to establish a military presence in northern Namibia. UNTAG's Martti Ahtisaari took advice from British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher,

who was visiting Southern Africa at the time, and authorized a limited contingent of South African troops to aid the South West African police in restoring order. A period of intense fighting followed, during which 375 PLAN fighters were killed. At a hastily arranged meeting of the Joint Monitoring Commission in Mount Etjo, a game park outside Otjiwarongo, it was agreed to confine the South African forces to base and return PLAN elements to Angola. While that problem was resolved, minor disturbances in the north continued throughout the transition period.

-- In October 1988, under orders of the UN Security Council, Pretoria was forced to demobilize some 1600 members of Koevoet (Afrikaans for crowbar). The Koevoet issue had been one of the most difficult UNTAG faced. This counter-insurgency unit was formed by South Africa after the adoption of UNSCR 435, and was not, therefore, mentioned in the Settlement Proposal or related documents. The UN regarded Koevoet as a paramilitary unit which ought to be disbanded but the unit continued to deploy in the north in armoured and heavily armed convoys.

-- In June 1989, the Special Representative told the Administrator-General that this behavior was totally inconsistent with the Settlement Proposal, which required the police to be lightly armed. Moreover, the vast majority of the Koevoet personnel were quite unsuited for continued employment in the South-West Africa Police (SWAPOL). The Security Council, in its resolution 640 (1989) of August 29, therefore demanded the disbanding of Koevoet and dismantling of its command structures. South African foreign minister, Pik Botha, announced on September 28, 1989 that 1,200 ex-Koevoet members would be demobilized with effect from the following day. A further 400 such personnel were demobilized on October 30. These demobilizations were supervised by UNTAG military monitors.

-- The 11-month transition period ended relatively smoothly. Political prisoners were granted amnesty, discriminatory legislation was repealed, South Africa withdrew all its forces from Namibia, and some 42,000 refugees returned safely and voluntarily under the auspices of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Almost 98 percent of registered voters turned out to elect members of the Constituent Assembly. The elections were held in November 1989 and were certified as free and fair by the UN Special Representative, with SWAPO taking 57 percent of the vote, just short of the two-thirds necessary to have a free hand in revising the framework constitution that had been formulated not by South African appointee Louis Pienaar. The opposition Democratic Turnhalle Alliance received 29 percent of the vote. The Constituent Assembly held its first meeting on November 21, 1989 and resolved unanimously to use the 1982 Constitutional Principles in Namibia's new constitution.

-- By February 9, 1990, the Constituent Assembly had drafted and adopted a constitution. Independence Day on March 21, 1990 was attended by numerous international representatives, including the main players, the UN Secretary-General and the President of South Africa, who jointly conferred formal independence on Namibia. Sam Nujoma was sworn in as the first President of Namibia. On March 1, 1994, the coastal enclave of Walvis Bay and twelve offshore islands were transferred to Namibia by South Africa. This followed three

years of bilateral negotiations between the two governments and the establishment of a transitional Joint Administrative Authority (JAA) in November 1992 to administer the 780 km² (300 square mile) territory. The peaceful resolution of this territorial dispute, which dated back to 1878, was praised by the international community, as it fulfilled the provisions of UN Resolution 432 which dated from 1978 which declared Walvis Bay to be an integral part of Namibia.

Appendix Two

Disarmament vs. Demilitarization:

Parallels Between SWAPO and Hezbollah

I have drawn a number of conclusions about the conflict in Namibia and presumptive parallels to and applications for the conflict in Lebanon. There is In the body of our monograph, these conclusions the parallels between the two conflicts are, in some cases, quite stark:

-- As I noted in this monograph: "For the leadership of SWAPO, the ambiguity in the international community's call for disarmament fuelled suspicions about the international community's true intentions."

I find this to be true, also, in the case of Hezbollah in Lebanon -- if not more so. It is a presumption on the part of Hezbollah's leaders that the international community (that is to say, the leadership of the Western community), is demanding its disarmament as a part of a general program that will lead to its defeat as a resistance movement in the Lebanese and larger Middle East context, as a part of a "colonial" and "imperialist" program that will lead to the end of Lebanese sovereignty and the literal extinguishment of its national and movement rights.

-- As I noted in this monograph: "SWAPO wanted to know how they would be disarmed and by whom; they wanted to know where the South African forces would be and in what circumstances, and when their militias would be confined and to what bases. Above all, the SWAPO militia senior leadership wanted guarantees that they would be protected if the South Africans launched a surprise attack."

In the wake of the 2006 war with Israel, the Hezbollah leadership assumes that any program of disarmament is being propounded as another means by which to secure its defeat -- that is to say, Israel and the United States, backed by the international community, will attempt to gain by political means what it could not gain by military means.

-- As I noted in this monograph: "The call for the disarmament of SWAPO also contained a psychological component that was ignored by the international community. The psychology of armed groups that have been exposed to prolonged conflict is such that they are not easily persuaded to put down their weapons unless they can receive guarantees of their safety. This is because the effect of a prolonged conflict is profound and enduring."

So too, this concern is at the heart of the current political situation in Lebanon, which is largely misunderstood in the West. Having triumphed in the August 2006 conflict with Israel, Hezbollah believes it should reap the benefits of its victory -- more importantly, that its position in the Lebanese political

environment must be protected through its full participation in and its right to a veto over Lebanese government decision making, particularly on those political programs that are inimical to its interests. This is particularly important in the wake of the 2006 war, as a variety of political forces that oppose Hezbollah inside of Lebanon are suspected by Hezbollah of having sided with Israel during the war. Hezbollah wants to gain assurances that this will not happen in the future, at the same time that it gains the rights to rebuild its community within the Lebanese political context.

-- As I noted in this monograph: "It is not hard to see how, in the case of Namibia, the international mediators -- the Western Contact Group -- was seen by SWAPO as part of a colonial program that insisted on asserting its cultural superiority by demanding disarmament without a commensurate disarmament of their (white) adversary."

So too, Hezbollah in Lebanon views U.S. and French "mediation" efforts as recidivist "colonial" meddling -- as a replay of the U.S. and French traditional influence in the region. The American interference comes as a result of its strategic relationship with Israel, the French interference as a long-term result of its colonial heritage in the Levant. Indeed, regional political figures are more sensitive to this claim than Western political leaders -- who readily acknowledge that the U.S. and France have "strategic interests" in the region that are "benign," while Hezbollah's strategic interests, they say, are not. Hezbollah rejects this viewpoint.

-- As I noted in this monograph: "Professor Mats Berdal in his Adelphi paper examines attempts since 1989 to disarm and demobilise guerrilla and government forces after prolonged periods of internal conflict. Berdal cautions against simplistic and "technical" assessments of the problems involved. He argues that disarmament and demobilisation processes "depend on the extent to which [they] go hand in hand with parallel efforts of political and economic reconstruction aimed at resolving or ameliorating as far as possible, the root causes of conflict."

The "disarmament" of Hezbollah will not go forward until its position as a legitimate Lebanese political force is acknowledged by the U.S., France, Israel and the international community. Once that happens, a program setting out an internal political resolution of outstanding Lebanese issues must necessarily precede any program that would lead to the creation of an integrated Lebanese national army that would contain Hezbollah units, which would include a command and control function that acknowledges Hezbollah's formative leadership in Lebanon, and the construction of a Lebanese army leadership corps of Shia officers.

-- As I noted in this monograph: "As was clearly understood by both sides, SWAPO forces in Angola would agree to lay down their arms once South African forces had withdrawn from Namibia. SWAPO cadre would then be "reintegrated" into a national force: it was understood that "disarmament" would be a part of a program of "demilitarization" but also of "remilitarization" -- and SWAPO cadre would continue to be treated as the People's Liberation Army of Namibia."

The successful construction of post-conflict military structures requires a carefully managed political process to succeed -- even when the international community establishes an agreed-upon framework for reintegration. That is to say, a political solution to political problems must necessarily precede any agreement on military problems. In Lebanon, political reconciliation is a necessary requirement for a resolution of military problems. The Namibia crisis, which went on for twenty years, shows that Western community has it backwards in Lebanon: the United States, France and Israel cannot simply require Hezbollah to disarm prior to a resolution of Lebanon's political crisis. Even then, in the case of a broad political reconciliation, the disarmament of Hezbollah will not go forward unless and until Hezbollah's role as a legitimate force in Lebanese society is recognized by the international community -- as SWAPO's was in Namibia.

-- As I noted in this monograph: "Professor Berdal argues that his studies of conflicts show that the success of disarmament and demobilisation programmes depend on the extent to which they go hand in hand with parallel efforts of well-managed political and economic reconstruction, aimed at resolving the root causes of conflict. In the case of SWAPO, progress on security issues -- and final resolution of them -- could only go forward once SWAPO leaders were convinced that their cadres would no longer be vulnerable to attack by South African or indigenous South African-sponsored military forces."

This is certainly the case in the Lebanese political and military environment. Hezbollah's demand that Lebanon be free from external threats -- from Israeli aggression -- is the one condition under which Hezbollah might be (might be) convinced that it could safely integrate its own forces into a Lebanese army. But such a guarantee could only come in the context of a larger and more comprehensive resolution of the Middle East conflict, a resolution that seems, at present, quite distant. As one Hezbollah leader put it during our discussions with him: "We will keep our weapons because if, someday, we negotiate with our adversaries, we want them to know that there is a price they will pay if they leave the table."

Conflicts Forum:

Beirut + 961- 3-803-028

London + 44 - 207-871-9558

Washington +1- 202-470-1114

Media inquiries +1- 828-337-8262