

# CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN NAMIBIA, 1990-2005

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## INTRODUCTION

The period 1960-63 following the achievement of independence by most African countries, the continent has witnessed several military coups or attempted coups in Nigeria, Ghana, Algeria, Congo Brazzaville and Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) etc. Nevertheless, with the end of the cold war and pressure from Western countries and America for the continent to democratize, African states have emerged from authoritarian rule. Consequently, most countries have found it important that the power that is held by the armed forces is utilized in a responsible way for the benefit of the society. To achieve this, they have opted for the subordination of the military to the civilian authority. Quite the opposite, the elected government of Lesotho was toppled in a coup d'etat in 1994. Over the years similar events have occurred in Burundi, Comoros, Gambia, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone (Nathan, 1996:1).

In view of the above highlighted scenario on the continent, there has not been a coup d'etat or attempted coup d'etat in Namibia since independence. On a continent where the involvement of the armed forces in politics is common, thus causing instability through military coups, Namibia's success story is unique. This paper looks into how the concept of civil-military relation in Namibia has contributed to security and stability since independence in 1990 to 2005. It does so in six sections. The first deals with Namibia's civil-military relations in transition; the second and third sections examine the executive control and parliamentary oversight function; the fourth section looks at the civil-military relations in the Ministry of Defense; the fifth assess the role of the civil society and political parties in civil-military relations. The concluding section then draws some practical recommendations on how best to implement civil-military relations in Namibia.

## 1. NAMIBIA'S CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN TRANSITION

### The Colonial Legacy

There were a number of developments during the colonial period that had critical implications for contemporary democratic civil-military relations in Namibia. First the country was colonized by Germany from the late 1800s and subsequently by South Africa from 1915 up until the year of independence in 1990.

First the Germans introduced constitutional mechanisms of civil control in South West Africa, as the country was known then. For instance, the colony's budget, including military expenditure, had to be approved by the German legislature in Berlin. In addition, the colonial military, known as the *Schutztruppen*, was designed as a small professional force and based within the colonial ministry rather than in the German Army High Command, further reinforcing civilian control of the armed forces (Bhebe, Pikirayi, and Rupiya, 2000:104).

Second, the tradition of constitutional and professional civil supremacy continued under the South African regime. In 1975 whites in Namibia were given some form of self-government. The South West African Constitution Act No. 42 of 1925 established a Legislative Assembly, which had limited law-making capacity. Nevertheless, defence and a number of other critical legislative fields were reserved for the South African Parliament (Soggot, 1986:20).

Conversely, the composition of the South African Defence Force (SADF) that was deployed in large numbers in Namibia facilitated greater civil supremacy. It was comprised of a small Permanent Force of professional soldiers and an Active Citizen Force made of conscripted white males (Bhebe et al, 2000:104).

With the intensification of the armed struggle by the South West Africa Peoples Organisation (SWAPO), a state of emergency was declared in Ovamboland and the SADF was deployed in large numbers in the north. After Angola's independence in 1975, the SADF became the main security arm of the South African government in Namibia. The establishment of the South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF) in 1979, which consisted of ethnic battalions of black Namibians, further strengthened the SADF (Dale, 1993:12).

### **The Liberation Struggle Experience**

Initially, there was primary and secondary resistance to foreign rule and domination. By the mid-1900s there was organized resistance against colonial occupation. At the forefront of the resistance movement was the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) that waged a political, diplomatic and military struggle against the South African colonial forces for more than three decades.

SWAPO was established in 1960. Its origins were in the Namibian labour movement and it had been created out of a labour association called the Ovamboland People's Organisation (Katjavivi, 1988:45).

SWAPO's primary strategy was the petitioning and lobbying of international organizations, such as the United Nations, to compel the South African government to withdraw from Namibia and facilitate a process that would lead to independence. SWAPO was not banned inside Namibia like the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress in South Africa. Consequently, a limited civilian political experience, free from military intervention, was sustained. Nevertheless, as SWAPO's Executive Committee was in exile, most of its operations were directed from outside Namibia.

In the mid-1960's the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), SWAPO's armed wing, was formed. There were some forms of civil control over PLAN. PLAN was created by the Central Committee of SWAPO which exercised civil control over the military. It should be mentioned here that SWAPO received military training and support from the former USSR, East European countries and China. Therefore, we could say, by and large, it was influenced by the Eastern model of civil military relations whereby there was Party control over the activities of PLAN through Commissar Systems and political indoctrination of members of the military. In essence, the structure of PLAN was subject to civil control of the party. For example, SWAPO President was the Commander-in-Chief of PLAN, the Secretary for Defence, and Commander of PLAN were all appointed from the Central Committee of the party. Therefore, military commanders were accountable and answerable to the SWAPO leadership which was largely comprised of civilians. In other words, PLAN was subordinated to the political leadership of SWAPO.

SWAPO as a liberation movement provided the overall political and military guidance to PLAN cadres. In terms of civil control, the Secretary of Defence, the Commander of PLAN, the deputy PLAN Commander and the Chief Political Commissar were members of the Central Committee and Politburo and accountable to the president of the party. The institution of civil control of the military in SWAPO was structured in such a manner that there was nothing that could be done without the directive from the central committee which was the highest decision making body.

People who were involved in the daily activities of PLAN were members of the central committee of the party. The majority of the members of the central committee were civilians although the military was also represented by the commander of PLAN, Deputy Commander of PLAN, Chief Political Commissar etc. This arrangement ensured civil control of PLAN.

It is also imperative to note that PLAN had an oath of allegiance that required all members of PLAN to respect the hierarchy of SWAPO as well as members of the central committee. There was also a code of conduct that stipulated how members of PLAN should behave among the civilian population. For example, PLAN members were required to respect civilian population and protect their property as well as not to abuse children. The supremacy of SWAPO over PLAN was emphasized at all times. PLAN also had the military discipline code which stipulated the activities of all PLAN members.

Moreover, the Central Committee of SWAPO was responsible for the formulation of the military policy. The general policy was to liberate Namibia. The Military Council was instrumental for policy and strategic planning. The general staff (who were also members of the Military Council) was responsible for drafting military tactics as well as implementation of the policies. Members of Military Council included regional commanders and commissars. Therefore, policy formulation followed the channel of command, that is, it was driven from the political level downwards to the military.

The decade preceding Angolan independence in 1975 proved to be a successful time for SWAPO. It was a period that saw a dramatic expansion of SWAPO's military operations, especially in the wake of the transfer of its political and military headquarters from Zambia to Angola. According to Katjavivi (1976) this was followed by an intensification of the armed struggle with PLAN units being deployed in larger numbers deeper into Namibian interior. By the late 1970s PLAN had gained the upper hand over SADF. PLAN had successful campaigns of urban sabotage in Windhoek, Swakopmund and Keetmanshoop, and established "no go" areas. This argues Bhebe led to the armed wing becoming more assertive within SWAPO.

The assertiveness became apparent in the mid-1970s with the outbreak of a crisis. In 1976 a segment of PLAN combatants who were operating from Zambia rebelled against the political leadership of SWAPO. They accused the leadership of lack of political accountability, military inactivity, inadequate food, clothing and weapons supplies. The aggrieved combatants also accused the political leadership of being insensitive to their needs and therefore called for a change in the leadership of SWAPO. Civil supremacy was only restored when the SWAPO Executive called in the Zambia military to quash the military rebellion. The political leadership thereafter strengthened mechanisms of civilian control within all units of PLAN.

In the mid-to late-1980s, in the context of a severe civil-military imbalance, in favour of PLAN, a major crisis emerged within the ranks of SWAPO. This crisis became known as the "Spy drama". In an attempt to restore the civil-military balance, the SWAPO leadership created a security organ with the objective of neutralizing the political influence of the military (Lamb, 1999:122-125). However, this organ, driven by extreme organizational suspicion, gained so much power and influence that it almost brought about SWAPO's demise. Many members of SWAPO were either arrested or killed on suspicion that they were enemy agents thus sowing seeds of fear and mistrust among the combatants.

### **Post-independence**

In 1988, as part of the Angolan peace settlement, South Africa agreed to withdraw from Namibia, leading to the holding of democratic elections and the country's independence in March 1990, thus ushering in a democratic dispensation.

Consequently, SWAPO was mandated to rule the country after winning democratic national elections with a majority vote of 57 percent (Electoral Commission of Namibia, 1989). A civil-military relation was evident with the careful selection of cabinet ministers as well as in the formation of the Namibian Defence Force (NDF). Namibia had no constitutionally established defence force at independence. One of the priorities of the new government was the formation an integrated NDF against a background of mistrust and suspicions. The NDF was established immediately after independence in 1990 to protect the territorial integrity of Namibia. It is composed of former adversaries of the Peoples' Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), SWAPO's military wing, and the former South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF).

Namibia, like most countries in southern Africa, has formal mechanisms that ensure civil control of the armed forces. Traditionally, civil supremacy in a democracy is enforced through the constitutional and legislative mechanisms. Namibia was guided by the constitution of the country to ensure adequate control over the armed forces. The constitution provides the framework for the transformation of the NDF. The constitutional responsibilities of the NDF, namely, to firstly defend and protect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and the people of Namibia against external attacks, and secondly, to assist civil authorities and community when required are fundamental in the transformation process.

Significantly, the main framework for the transformation of the military was provided by the formulation of the Statement on Defence Policy that provided the new vision of the NDF. The new vision is that of a broad representation of all Namibians at all ranks in the defence force to reflect the demographic composition of the population as well as a defence force that is trustworthy and legitimate in the eyes of the Namibian people. Subsequently, the transformation of the NDF included the following interrelated issues/steps:

1. Institutionalization of civilian control over the armed forces.
2. The reintegration of the ex-combatants of PLAN and ex-fighters of the SWATF and Koevoet into a national defence force.
3. Amendment of the Defence Act (Act 20 of 1990) amending the South African Defence Act (Act 44 of 1957).
4. Disarmament, demobilization/downsizing of the armed forces.
5. Affirmative Action and equal recruitment opportunity in the defence force.
6. Activities aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficient functioning of the NDF and Ministry of Defence.

Accordingly, as a result of the above issues a democratic tradition of civil supremacy emerged in Namibia.

As in most transitions elsewhere, the Namibia process faced numerous impediments on the way to democratic governance. First, there was a violation of the ceasefire agreement between PLAN and the South African Defence Force. This was followed by widespread intimidation of SWAPO supporters by the South West African Police in the run up to elections. These events would have led to the resumption of the armed conflict, if it was not for the strict conditions put down by regional and international bodies that negotiated for the independence of Namibia.

### **Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration, Repatriation and Resettlement (DDRRR)**

The United Nations Resolution 435(1978) outlined a 'peace plan' for Namibia's transition to independence under the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG). Disarmament, and demobilization were part of the 'peace plan' as enshrined in the mandate of UNTAG. UNTAG's duties included:

- Monitoring the ceasefire;
- Ensuring that troops of SADF and SWAPO were confined to bases; and

- Supervising the rapid reduction and eventual removal of South African military forces from Namibia (United Nations, *The Blue Helmets: A review of the United Nations Peacekeeping, 1996:209-210*).

The demobilization process in Namibia took place in the context of war to peace. With the end of the Cold War, downsizing armies and demobilizing combatants have become central to the process of military reforms (Forman and Welch, 1998:33). Undoubtedly, reform of the military is central to promoting civilian control of the government in transition period.

The decision to reduce the size or who to demobilize was a precondition for the United Nations supervised election. Nevertheless, UNTAG did not have a post-conflict mandate to assist with the reintegration of demobilized combatants, this was left to the new government. Consequently, disarmament and reintegration of former opposing forces and the creation of a new national defence force that was ethnically and politically balanced characterized the process in Namibia.

Scholars such as Forman et al (1998) have identified two goals for demobilization and reintegration programme. The first goal, according to them, is that demobilization of ex-fighters or soldiers in the short-run provides an important window of time for the improvement of on-the-ground security. It also gives newly elected governments a chance to emerge without the threat of military repression or the need to spend scarce resources on a process that is expensive. Second, is the medium-term and long-range aspect of giving ex-fighters a new start by returning them to civilian life. This last process needs greater consideration as is vital for any process of promoting improved civil-military relations.

The reintegration process of ex-combatants into Namibian society was handled by government with the assistance of non-governmental organizations such as the Council of churches in Namibia (CCN), and the Socio-economic Integration Programme for Ex-Combatants as well as community committees. They assisted in activities such as job placements, providing temporary shelter, food, clothing, counseling and transport. Bilateral donors such as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the European Community also assisted during the process.

The government also developed a training programme for the unemployed ex-combatants, the Development Brigade, that was later renamed Development Brigade Corporation, with the view to impart practical agricultural and construction skills sufficient for sustainable future self-employment.

Nonetheless, Namibia encountered some institutional and operational problems such as lack of funds, lack of technical expertise and qualified personnel in running programmes such as the Development Brigade Corporation, as well as the country's slow and cumbersome land resettlement programme. Access to land was problematic to ex-combatants who were not treated as a preferential target group under the land reform programme. This situation presented a potential threat to national security and stability as it was confirmed in the mid-1990 when dissatisfied unemployed ex-combatants took to the streets. This was a red flag that political leaders could hardly ignore. In response, the government implemented a 'Peace Project' aimed at affirmative job placement of ex-combatants mainly in the public service. This project enhanced the prospect of long term reintegration of ex-combatants into the society as well as preventing them from causing insecurity in the country.

Demobilization not only impacts on a nation's security, but also affects the way in which a nation's pool of workers can be reintegrated into civilian society after years of fighting.

### **BMATT driven civil military relations**

Like many independent Africa countries whose armed forces adopted their former colonial master's security institutions, Namibia's civil-military relations has been tailored upon that of Britain, though it was not a British colony. At independence in 1990, Namibia adopted a British-influenced liberal framework for civil-military relations under the British Military Assistance Training Team (BMATT).

The BMATT assisted in providing standardization training to the NDF. The team also assisted in setting up the structure of the military as well as the ministry of defence. Basically, the MoD is operating along similar lines to the British Ministry of Defence. Presently, the Ministry of defence also serves as the Headquarters of the Namibian Defence Force.

For all practical purposes, all the directorates and divisions of the MoD fall under the Permanent Secretary who is the accounting officer. This ensures civilian involvement in military decision making. In addition, the

inclusion of a Secretariat to the MoD structure enables civilians to do the work such as finance, administration, judiciary, medical etc. that can be done better and at lower costs by civilians rather than the military.

The structure of the NDF is subjected to the powers of the minister of defence to ensure checks and balance. The minister directs the chief of defence force in the execution of his duties. On the other hand, the permanent secretary performs such duties and functions as may be necessary for democratic and civilian management of the defence functions to enhance parliamentary and ministerial control over the defence force.

### **Operations**

In terms of the Namibian Constitution, the President is the Commander-in-Chief of the defence force with the authority to appoint senior military officers and to declare war (Article 27, 32 sub-Article 4c).

From a democratic perspective this is a cause for concern. Along this line of thought, Kahn (1997) notes that war results in military expansion, growth in the power and influence of government and its intrusions into the lives of citizens as it increases tax and limits individual freedoms. This view was proved right as this constitutional provision led to the deployment of the NDF in the DRC in 1998, without the knowledge or approval of parliament. Subsequently, Namibia's defence budget increased so as to maintain NDF soldiers in the DRC. This also meant that the taxpayers had to dig deep into their pockets to finance Namibian troops deployed along with Angola and Zimbabwean Armed Forces to prop-up President Laurent Kabila's government which was threatened by an external invasion. Without doubt, the deployment of troops in the DRC introduced a new dynamic into Namibia's civil-military relations. Some analysts considered this action an abuse of constitutional power that could seriously undermine the democratic dispensation in Namibia.

In spite of this, the NDF has rendered the following services in support of the civil authorities and communities: the repatriation and settlement of Namibian national from Botswana; apprehension of foreign trawlers illegally fishing in territorial waters; joint operations with Namibian Police to ensure law and order; search and rescue mission of a Cessna aircraft that crashed in the Namib-Naukluft; mine clearance operation; recovering of stolen cattle; assisted the Ministry of Health and Social Services in escorting pension paymasters; and fire fighting services.

NDF soldiers also assisted in peacekeeping operations such as the United Nations mission to monitor election in Cambodia in 1993 (Namibia: A Decade of Peace, Democracy and Prosperity 1990-200:388). In addition the defence force helped in the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) in 1996 and 1997 where they were charged with road verification, VIP escort as well as a Rapid Reaction Force. The NDF continued to serve with the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) and its duty ended in 1999 (Namibia: A Decade of Peace, Democracy and Prosperity 1990-200:389). In 2005 the NDF deployed to serve with the UN observer mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea as well as in the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia and with the African Union (AU) observer mission in the Sudan.

### **Consolidation of institutional arrangements**

Negonga (2000) states that the constitution of Namibia outlines the following principles, structures, responsibilities and relationships necessary for civil-military relations:

- The President shall be the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Force;
- The President may, with the approval of Parliament, declare a state of national defence;
- The Minister of Defence shall be accountable to Parliament for the activities of the defence force;
- Parliament shall approve the defence budget annually; a joint standing committee on defence and security shall be established in Parliament to investigate and make recommendations on matters affecting defence and security.

Civilian control and supervision of the armed forces in Namibia is vested in democratic structures such as the constitution, parliament and the civilian dominated ministry of defence. The interim constitution which was drawn up during the negotiation process provided for the establishment of the constituent assembly. This provided the basis for the elections and the establishment of a democratic government in Namibia. The constitution, (Article 118), provides for the establishment of the NDF, the Defence Amendment Act (Act 20 of 1990) for the structure, roles and functions.

Traditional forms of political and parliamentary control over the armed forces that have been successfully applied elsewhere in the world and are being practiced in Namibia includes the institution of a strong and legitimate civil dominated Ministry of Defence as described above; Parliamentary Committees that have a total or partial jurisdiction over defence and security matters such as budget, public accounts, foreign affairs

and intelligence; the authority of the Ministry of Finance over defence spending, the Ombudsman system to whom aggrieved civilians or military personnel can refer military related complaints, and the provision of legislation allowing the public access to and information on military related developments.

In Namibia, the legislature possesses oversight powers which include the enactment of legislation to prevent excessive secrecy with respect to the budget. The legislature determines the military's budget allocation and procurement expenditure. The National Assembly has the power to approve budgets. As per the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia cabinet ministers are accountable to both the President and Parliament (Articles 63 sub-Article 2A, 41). Equally, the National Council which is composed of representatives from the thirteen political regions of the country has the power to review bills passed by the National Assembly and has certain investigative powers (Article 59 sub-Article 3).

Civil supremacy in Namibia was further consolidated by the failure of SWAPO to win a two-thirds majority in the first democratic elections when the opposition parties secured 31 out of 72 seats in the National Assembly. The existence of a reasonably strong opposition meant that the risk of using the military for political reasons by the ruling party was significantly reduced (Lamb, 1999: 7).

## **2. EXECUTIVE CONTROL**

Civil military relations literature view armed forces as institutions geared at defending the state against external threats. In addition, the control of the armed forces is vested in the executive branch, which represents the contract between elected officials and the electorate.

Almost across the world, democratic constitutions implement the principle of civilian supremacy by naming the head of state or government whether it is the president or prime minister as the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. This principal institutional arrangement aims to exert control over the military.

Similarly, in Namibia, the head of state, who is an executive state president, is also the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The command and authority over the armed forces rest with the Head of State, which is sometimes delegated to the Minister of Defence. In essence, the executive power decides when, where and how the military will be used.

According to Hage G. Geingob, the first Prime Minister of Namibia, many African countries experienced problems as a result of inadequate checks and balances. He argues that in the absence of checks and balances trouble could come from where the executive power rested. Therefore Namibia opted for an executive presidency with appropriate checks and balances (The Parliamentarian, 2002:8).

Nonetheless, while this is a necessary condition for asserting civilian control over the armed forces, it is not enough. The head of state generally does not have the time or the skill to personally direct the formulation and implementation of defence policy. As a result, he/she will end up delegating responsibility to the Minister of defence.

Scholars such as Giraldo (2001) have identified reforms necessary to strengthen the role of civilians in military matters. Firstly, is that civilian control is likely to be more effective if civilian power is intense and there is a single clear-cut chain of command, to avoid the military causing confrontation among civilians within the executive branch. Secondly, he argues that bodies with strong military representation should be downgraded to advisory roles with reduced policy authority. Thirdly, is that the responsibilities given to civilians within the Ministry of Defence should be defined or else many tasks may fall to the military.

In Namibia, the Executive is comprised of the President and cabinet ministers. The President chooses cabinet ministers who also serve as members of parliament. The Executive is accountable to the legislature. Members of cabinet are responsible to provide Parliament with regular reports on matters under their control. They are expected to explain Government actions to Parliament in areas such as defence and security, foreign policy, international trade agreement and the national budget.

The Executive formulates policies, suggests laws and implements laws passed by the Legislature. It should be noted that the NDF is subordinated to the executive and the legislature to ensure checks and balance.

In Stepan's (1988) view, the burden of developing civil military relations consistent with democratization lies on the legislature and the executive. To this end, he outlines the main tasks for the executive as (1) demilitarization of the executive and cabinet posts such as the Ministry of Defence. (2) Active intervention in redefining the existing military doctrine, force mission, goals, structures and training. He further identified four responsibilities of the legislature as follows: (1) legislative self-empowerment concerning military

matters and policies. (2) The capacity to review military budgets competently. (3) Development of the legislature's own research information and monitoring know-how. (4) An appropriate committee system.

### 3. PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

The specific role of the parliament in civil military relations is at the heart of issues of democratic control. Parliaments are expected to give a serious check on the dictates, authority, and roles of military establishments and structures. Additionally, Parliaments should give scrutiny not only of the military, but also of the executive.

Namibia has a bicameral system of Parliament. It is comprised of the National Assembly and the National Council. Parliament in Namibia is a legislative branch of three branches of the state. The other two are the Executive and the Judiciary. The legislature is the supreme lawmaking branch of the state. The functions and powers of Parliament, among others include:

1. to oversee the activities of government ministries/offices/agencies and ensure detailed scrutiny of the Executive's work.
2. hold public hearings to hear the views of citizens on the bills being considered.
3. approve government spending and regulate taxation by considering the budgets prepared by government ministries.
4. approve international agreements entered into by the Government of Namibia with other governments/organizations.
5. debate issues and advise the State President on matters the Constitution authorizes him/her to undertake (A Guide to Parliament of Namibia, 2001:2).

Each house of parliament has constitutional power to create multi-party joint parliamentary committees with oversight powers of all defence and security activities (Article 59 (3) and Article 74 (2)). Thus the constitution gives effect to the principle of transparency and accountability in the activities of the military. To this end, both houses of parliament have established joint standing committees on defence and security. The National Assembly has a Standing Committee on Security which has the duty to:

- monitor, investigate and make recommendations relating to any aspect of the legislative programme, budget, rationalization, restructuring, functioning, organization, structure, personnel, policy formulation in the Ministry of Defence;

- exercise an overall oversight function with regard to security matters in Namibia;
- investigate issues relating to human rights violation;
- obtain information from government regarding any real or perceived threat to the security of the Republic of Namibia;
- enquire into and monitor international protocols, conventions and agreements that may affect the security situation in Namibia (Rules of Procedure for Committees of the National Assembly Edition 4, pp 17-18.).

The National Council, on the other hand, has a Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security whose functions are:

- To review international and regional cooperation as regards trade, tourism, peace and security;
- To review Namibia's foreign policy and make recommendations to the Council;
- To review and monitor the defence and security policies and requirements and advise the Council;
- To deal with questions falling within the ambits of ministries of Foreign and Home Affairs, Defence and Security matters (Standing Rules and Orders of the National Council, pp.56-57).

Nevertheless, despite the existence of the parliamentary committees on security and defence, none of these committees have effectively performed their duties so far. These committees are not active but reactive to security and defence issues that are of national concern. For instance, they seem to be doing something when there is a bill to be debated, but on other days they are dormant. On top of that, Members of parliament who constitute these committees are not well vested in security and defence issues. Moreover, there are not enough supporting staffs to assist members of parliament in executing their duties.

#### **4. CIVIL MILITARY RELATIONS WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE**

##### **Establishment of the Ministry of Defence**

Du Pisani (2000) notes that, the concept of civil-military relations refers to the hierarchy of structure, authority and function, and the interaction between the executive, the legislature, the judiciary and the citizenry on the other hand, and the armed forces on the other, as well as, the civil supremacy over these forces.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) was established at independence in 1990 as a department of state responsible for setting up the organizational and administrative structure necessary to manage the defence force.

The main responsibilities of the ministry are to formulate and execute defence policies for the government, to provide central operational and administrative headquarters for the NDF and procure its equipment (Namibia: A Decade of Peace, Democracy and Prosperity 1990-200:389). The MoD is also responsible for the presentation of defence budget to parliament.

The MoD is headed by a minister, who is a civilian and political head of the ministry. He/she also chairs the Defence Staff Council, the ministry's highest management committee. The minister also represents the ministry in the National Assembly and cabinet. He/she is supported by the chief of defence force who is responsible for military effectiveness of the NDF and the permanent secretary who is responsible for the financial, administrative and political aspects of defence policy and its execution. The minister and the permanent secretary constitute the civilian authority on military matters on behalf of government.

Negonga (2000) writes that civilians formulate defence policy and are responsible for the political dimension of defence. Military officers execute defence policy and contribute to policy formulation on the basis of their functional expertise. The Defence Secretariat which is civilian dominated, is responsible for coordinating function.

Civilians in the ministry are employed permanently on the basis of their specialized skills, while military officers are seconded for a certain period and rotate between defence force units throughout the country.

The MoD consists of six directorates, namely, Policy and Operation, Personnel, Logistics, Medical Services, Military Intelligence, and Finance. Each directorate consists of a number of divisions. Due to financial considerations the MoD fulfils the dual role as the Headquarters of the Defence. The Chief of the Defence Force and the MoD are located in the same complex. According to the Statement of Defence Policy, the principal advantage of this design is that it facilitates clear political control of higher direction and management of defence (1994:4). Civilians and military officers work side by side in these various directorates and divisions.

Be that as it may, practically, this arrangement may get in the way of civil supremacy as it could lead to unnecessary military influence in the affairs of the civilian-oriented MoD. However, there are not enough civilian employees with the necessary capacity to support the political authority in the Ministry to perform his duties.

## **5. THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN CIVIL MILITARY RELATIONS**

Scholars such as Forman (1998) are of the opinion that the extent to which civil society is permitted or wants to engage in military issues can be used as an indicator of the country's maturity of civil military relations.

Stepan (1988) argues that the task of civil society is to commit themselves to the defence of democratic rights and processes and stop inviting the military to interfere in political conflicts. The civil society, he argues, should be capable of challenging the existing security doctrine.

It is with no doubt that almost all nations need armed forces. In addition, the military is expected to effectively perform their task of external security without infringing on the rights of the society. It should, however, be noted that members of the armed forces have undertaken to fight and die for the nation; therefore the society must be prepared to accept this unique feature which comes from military duty. The society, for instance, should also accept inconveniences which may be caused by the armed forces such as the use of land for training purposes or of airspace for noisy aircraft. Above all, the society should accept that the armed forces are entitled to proper pay, accommodation, living condition, and friendship within the communities they serve. The military should also be welcome back into the civil economy after their service or when they retire from active duty.

The society need to partner the armed forces in the above mentioned issues to maintain common understanding and respect of each other, after all, they are both part to the democratic process.

Civil society organizations in Namibian are registered under Section 21 (a) of the Companies Act of 1973 "not for gain" (Registration of Civil Society Organisations in Namibia, 2005: p.8). These organizations are established, among others, for the purpose of:

- Promoting religion, art, science, education, charity, recreation or any other cultural or social activity or communal group interests;
- Advocacy – facilitating the development of policy formulation with increased participation of civil society;
- Making people aware of their human rights and responsibilities and ensure their role in a democracy.

In this study, civil society will refer to the National Society for Human Rights (NSHR), Namibia Non-Governmental Forum (NANGOF), Legal Assistance Center (LAC), Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR), academicians at the University of Namibia (UNAM), media practitioners and political parties. These groups and institutions are in one way or the other involved in education and advocacy for building a high political culture necessary for democratic participation in Namibia. Nevertheless, the civil society in Namibia has not been actively involved in contributing and debating on defence and security issues.

Although these organizations focus on different aspects of the democratic process, they all have a common goal of enhancing democracy in Namibia. These organisations complement each other in their activities especially on governance issues, but they have failed to take a leading role in the democratization of the armed forces in the country.

Many non-governmental organizations show little interest in defence and security matters. Nevertheless, the National Society for Human Rights had been, to a lesser extent involved in the defence of democratic rights of citizens. Conversely, research oriented non-governmental organizations such as the Institute of Public Policy Research and Namibia Institute for Democracy are only involved in promoting democracy and governance in Namibia.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper has examined the experience of Namibia's civil military relations. The subordination of the military to civilian authorities and how it contributed to security and stability featured strongly. Namibia's civil-military relations in transition were characterized by a strong history of civil military relations that dates back to the colonial and liberation struggle periods. SWAPO, like other liberation movements such as the ANC, ZANU, ZAPU, FRELIMO, PAC etc benefited from countries where it operated. These countries had

clear and continuing subordination of the military to civilian tradition. Therefore, when SWAPO came to power military values, traditions and cultures continued after independence. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration played prominently in Namibia's transition to independence and democracy, following negotiated settlement to the long anti-colonial liberation struggle. The transitional period was characterized by historical mutual mistrust and animosity. However, earlier conflict dynamics influenced the establishment and reintegration of former adversaries into a new and legitimate national defence force (NDF) that was central to post-conflict peace and nation building. In addition; the political institutions such as the constitution and the legislature has laid a strong foundation for the country to move forward. Namibia has great respect for and treats its constitution like a sacred document. The set-up of the Ministry of Defence that co-locates the defence headquarters is a confidence building measure for both civilians and the military. It reduces suspicions in the operations of both civilians and the military, for example civilian officials and military personnel work together as a team in preparing defence budgets, policy formulation etc. The Minister of Defence is also a Member of Parliament and therefore accountable for the operations of the military. Moreover, the fact that the defence budget is debated in parliament ensures transparency and accountability. This arrangement has created confidence in the operations of the military in Namibia. Notwithstanding all these, there are no guarantees of sustaining the current civil military relations. The military is poorly paid compared to their civilian counterparts and generally their living condition is not good. This may eventually lead to disgruntlement within the military and cause some problems in the future for the civilian authorities.

The civil societies as well as political parties are not doing enough on issues of security and defence. Namibia has no big NGO interface like in other countries. There is also no robust environment for NGOs. Most Research oriented non-governmental organizations such as the Institute of Public Policy Research and Namibia Institute for Democracy are only involved in promoting democracy and governance in Namibia. Political parties, especially those in opposition play a less advocate role in bringing issues to the fore because they are often over-ruled by the ruling party, which is in the majority.

While there is no one formula for civil military relations, the following broad recommendations can be considered to best implement civil-military relations in Namibia:

- Crafter and implementers of civil military relations should understand the dynamics of the past conflict of which the process is a product.

- Establish a closer interface between the ministries of foreign affairs and defence to engage the public in the definition of external agenda for Namibia.
- There is a need for more robust committee system in parliament for checks and balances. This will ensure that parliamentary committee members become proactive and not to wait for bills to be tabled in parliament.
- More financial resources should be dedicated to the services of members of parliament as well as the employment of researchers and assistants.
- There is a strong need to separate the executive from the legislature to ensure transparency and accountability.
- Research organizations should take a lead in generating important policy-directed research in defence matters. These institutions should actively engage in the study of defence and security issues. They should be able to provide independent documents and analysis and present to decision-making bodies and to the public an up-to-date on the country's defence policy and other related issues.
- While Namibia has good policies on human rights, transparency, accountability etc there is need for the country to strengthen its human capacity to implement these policies.
- In a pre-budget phase – the public, civil society and other stakeholders should be given the opportunity to make proposals before the final defence budget is tabled in parliament.
- There is need to educate the civil society on the role of the defence force to improve the relationship between civilians and the military.
- NGOs, political parties, intellectuals and organized civil society should play an important role in setting the government agenda.

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