

# UN Peace Implementation in Namibia: The Causes of Success

LISE MORJÉ HOWARD

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The United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia was successful both in terms of implementing its mandate as set forth in Security Council Resolution 435, and in terms of creating the institutional and political conditions for ongoing political stability in Namibia. It is often argued that successful peace implementation is possible only with the consent of the warring parties, and with strong Security Council interests. This article argues that while these two elements were important, the ability of UNTAG to adapt to the needs of the post-war environment in Namibia was the critical factor sealing the stable Namibian peace. Evidence for the argument is derived primarily from personal interviews with many of the major actors, as well as unpublished UN reports.

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In the spring of 1990, the UN concluded arguably the most successful multidimensional peacekeeping operation in its history.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) differed from all previous UN peacekeeping operations in that its primary means and purpose were political (in overseeing a democratic transition after decades of civil war and colonial rule), rather than military (where monitoring a ceasefire is the primary task). The mission also brought about the innovation of several important peacekeeping mechanisms that are still in use today, namely, a western 'Contact Group', an elaborate 'information programme', and most significantly, UN 'civilian policing'. Overall, the operation was successful on two fronts: first, in terms of implementing the Security Council Resolution 435 mandate; and second, by creating the conditions for the ongoing political stability of post-independence Namibia.

This operation is important to study, since its success drove the UN and the international community to engage in similar, complex peacekeeping missions across the globe, in order to end bitter civil disputes. The conditions for the success of this operation should be heeded by those who wish to replicate that success in other parts of the world.

Lise Morjé Howard, University of Maryland

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Why was the Namibia mission so successful? It is commonly argued that the interests of the powerful states on the Security Council, and the situational difficulty of the civil war, are the two primary elements that contribute to success in peacekeeping. This article argues that, while a fortuitous post-civil war implementation context and moderate Security Council interests played central roles, the ability of UNTAG to learn from, and adapt to, the needs of the post-civil war environment was a third and critically important factor in achieving the stable post-war peace.

### Implementation Context

Formerly known as South West Africa, Namibia is a sparsely populated, desert territory about one and a half times the size of France. In the late 1800s it was colonized by Germany.<sup>2</sup> After Germany's defeat in the First World War, South Africa occupied the territory. South West Africa was then under British control for a brief period, later to be re-occupied by South Africa in 1920, which administered it under a League of Nations mandate. After the Second World War, South West Africa was slated to fall under UN Trusteeship, but South Africa refused to relinquish control.

In 1966, the United Nations General Assembly declared South African rule illegal, and named the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) the 'sole and authentic' representative of the Namibian people. In 1971 the International Court of Justice also ruled against South Africa's mandate. But international declarations and rulings did not induce South Africa to give up its claims on Namibia. By the late 1950s, South Africa had already institutionalized its system of *apartheid* in Namibia, and considered it a fifth province, governed by a South African 'Administrator-General'. South Africa's economic interests in Namibia's diamond and mineral mines, plus a desire to protect the minority white way of life, led to increasing tensions. The year 1966 marked the first armed battle between SWAPO and South African forces at the SWAPO camp in Omgulumbashe, Namibia. Such battles were mirrored across southern Africa, as liberation movements arose in Angola, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

The South African government sought to oppose the rise of SWAPO by building up both South African-sympathetic indigenous administrative structures and military forces in Namibia. First, in terms of the civilian administration, South Africa sought to establish an 'internal government' in Namibia. This began with the December

1978 and November 1980 elections to the ethnically based 'Representative Authorities'. Leaders from various ethnic groups were granted enormous privileges, and while they were segregated from the white administration and its facilities, they benefited significantly by cooperating with South African-influenced rule.<sup>3</sup>

Ethnic divisions, while downplayed in most of the literature on Namibia, are partially relevant for understanding some of the Namibian internal political battles during the 1970s and 1980s, and even some tensions today. Ovambos make up the largest ethnic group (about 50 per cent), and were the founders of SWAPO. Alienation from what has been perceived as Ovambo nationalism in SWAPO helped to convince leaders of several other ethnic groups to support the South African-imposed Representative Authorities. Some also united in the multiracial Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) – formerly the second largest political party in Namibia, and one that is still struggling to rid itself of its identity as the 'colonial collaborator'.<sup>4</sup> Part of the DTA's political platform during the 1980s was also that it would protect Namibia from the spread of socialism as promulgated by SWAPO. Thus, through various ideological, ethnic, and instrumental means, South Africa built support for its administrative structures in Namibia.

A second aspect of South Africa's strategy to maintain its authority in Namibia was to build up indigenous military forces to fight against SWAPO and its 'People's Liberation Army' (PLAN). Under the 1980 legislative proclamation AG8, Namibians of fighting age were forcibly conscripted into the South West African Territorial Force (SWATF), which was designed to fight alongside the South African Defence Forces (SADF) against SWAPO.<sup>5</sup> By 1986, 'officially, 35,000 [SADF] troops were stationed in Namibia, with unofficial estimates indicating the much higher number of 80,000'.<sup>6</sup> Joining the SADF, by 1989, the SWATF had grown to over 30,000 troops, about half of whom were non-white Namibians. In addition, 7,000 to 10,000 Namibians<sup>7</sup> were put into well-paying 'counterinsurgency' units, under the South West African Police (SWAPOL), including the infamous Koevoet or 'crowbar' unit – a multiracial group, notorious for its brutal and indiscriminate use of force.<sup>8</sup> The build-up of these forces meant that up to half of those fighting against SWAPO were indigenous Namibians, coming from a wide swath of groups and regions. During the 1980s, the war of liberation from South Africa took on more of the quality of a civil war, with Namibian political groups and military forces fighting each other for control of the state.<sup>9</sup>

Battles over the victors of Namibian (and Angolan) independence continued until late 1987 and early 1988, the fiercest of which were waged in northern Namibia and parts of Angola. In late 1988, a military stalemate was reached in Angola, with the battle of Cuito Cuanevale. The large costs to South Africa of supporting the military operations in Angola and Namibia,<sup>10</sup> coupled with the anti-apartheid international economic sanctions, and the growing mobilization of church groups, students, and workers in Namibia and South Africa, led the South African government to back down on its military campaigns. This, in addition to the ousting of the P.W. Botha administration, the release of Nelson Mandela, US pressure to remove Cuban troops from Angola,<sup>11</sup> and Soviet pressure on the African National Congress and similar organizations to back away from the strategy of armed struggle, culminated in an opening in the Namibian negotiations.

### Great Power Interests

This opening in the negotiations had been a long time in the making. As far back as 1978, the UN Security Council had agreed to the basic principle of a UN-assisted Namibian independence process, with a decision in favour of Security Council Resolution 435. But disputes remained over which groups would determine the outcome of Namibian independence. The rough international political division over Namibia was between, on one side, South Africa, the Namibian 'internal parties', and at times the Contact Group,<sup>12</sup> and on the other, SWAPO, the UN General Assembly, the non-aligned states in the UN Security Council, and the front-line states.<sup>13</sup> The UN Secretariat's UNTAG mission, mandated by 435, was supposed to be impartial, even though both South Africa and SWAPO accused UNTAG of favouring the other side. South Africa and its supporters on the Security Council, namely the US, the United Kingdom, and West Germany,<sup>14</sup> favoured a South African-administered independence process.<sup>15</sup> This would ensure that western investments in Namibia would remain secure, as some feared possible nationalization of major industries in a SWAPO-driven independence. These three western states, along with Canada and France, were also members of the Contact Group. The Contact Group brought South Africa to the negotiating table, and drafted three 1978 documents, which created the basic framework for UNTAG's peace implementation mandate.

*The Mandate*

The documents included first, the Contact Group's Settlement Proposal of 10 April 1978 (S/12636), second, the Secretary-General's report of 29 August 1978 (S/12827), and finally Security Council Resolution 435. First, the Settlement Proposal called for free and fair elections to pave the way for a transition to Namibian independence. The proposal included the mandate for the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative, who 'will have to satisfy himself at each stage as to the fairness and appropriateness of all measures affecting the political process at all levels of administration before such measures take effect. Moreover the Special Representative may himself make proposals in regard to any aspect of the political process.'<sup>16</sup> This decision placed the Special Representative at the centre of all operational decision making. Finnish diplomat Martti Ahtisaari was chosen for the position in 1978, after his appointment as the UN General Assembly's Commissioner for Namibia starting the year before. Ahtisaari had previously held diplomatic posts in Africa, serving as Finnish Ambassador to Tanzania, with accreditation to Zambia, Mozambique, and Somalia. Ahtisaari would eventually become the UN Under Secretary-General for Administration and later, the President of Finland.

The Settlement Proposal included a very specific timetable for the implementation of the elections, with explicit tasks that the UN, the South African government, and SWAPO were to fulfil. The elections were to create an independent Namibian Constituent Assembly, which would draw up a constitution immediately after being elected, and govern as the independent Namibian National Assembly from then on. All adult Namibians would be eligible to express political views, form political parties, and vote by secret ballot without fear of discrimination. Before the election campaigns, all discriminatory or restrictive laws were to be repealed, all refugees welcomed back into the country, all hostile acts were to cease, and all political prisoners were to be released. An independent jurist was to be appointed to oversee matters concerning the release of political prisoners and detainees.

While the above provisions concerning the elections were basically clear, some uncertainties remained, many of which were cleared up five months later in the Secretary-General's report S/12827. For example, Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar requested specific numbers of forces based on estimates of the numbers of South African forces in the country. He united the civilian and military components of UNTAG

under one Special Representative. He also broadly defined the military component's ability to use force in self-defence, including 'resistance to attempts to prevent it from discharging its duties under the mandate of the Security Council',<sup>17</sup> and he estimated the pullout date to be one year from the start date. The conditions for ensuring free and fair elections were also further elaborated and grouped in a logical order. However, the report did not address a number of issues including: the start date of the operation; how and whether SWAPO would be restricted to base; the process of disarmament; police, judiciary, and constitutional reform; reform of the civil service; economic reform, including the question of land redistribution; the specifics of financing the operation; and the extent to which the UN would be 'controlling' or merely 'supervising' the elections. These uncertainties, while potentially hindering the operation, actually helped the Special Representative define the mission based on the realities of 1988 when the operation began, rather than 1978, when the accord was initially drafted.

Finally, Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978, a rather brief document, accepted the previous proposals, reiterated the objective of the withdrawal of South Africa's 'illegal administration' of Namibia, welcomed SWAPO's readiness to sign a ceasefire, called on South Africa to sign, and later included an annex on broad constitutional principles. Other than the constitutional principles, it did not attempt to address the thorny issues listed above.

The 435 vote was not unanimous. In a mild diplomatic counter to the western initiative, the USSR and Czechoslovakia abstained while China did not participate in the vote. As the Soviet Ambassador to the UN at the time, Anatolyi Adamishin, explains: 'We [Soviets] did not hate 435, we only considered it unbalanced... Our African friends asked us not to veto it because it was better than nothing. So we agreed. Later our friends reproached us, requesting that we do something about it because it gave too many advantages to South Africa. But by then it was too late.'<sup>18</sup> But the resolution also gave many advantages to SWAPO, namely the possibility of internationally supported majority rule and independence. While it appeared that conditions were ripe for implementation of 435, both sides remained resistant to setting a ceasefire date, believing each was being pressured by its allies to concede too much.

### *Linkage*

The beginning of implementation was then further delayed after the 1980 US presidential elections. The new Reagan administration

replaced the Carter foreign policy team and introduced a strategy of 'linkage' as a way to end the conflict. According to Chester Crocker, former US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, South Africa had declared that it would agree to Namibian independence only after Cuban troops had been withdrawn from Angola. The Reagan administration also wanted to ensure that Namibia remained free from the spread of communism, and that this could only be assured if Namibian independence were linked with Cuban troop withdrawal.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, in the UK, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was eager to join in the 'ringing assault on socialism'.<sup>20</sup>

Although the linkage policy may have been created with the best of intentions, it caused the Namibian peace process to falter. France, under the socialist government in 1983 temporarily suspended its participation in the Contact Group in protest of the linkage policy. Later, West Germany and Canada followed suit. In addition, SWAPO, Angola, and the front-line states interpreted the new US position as an indication that the United States supported South African policies, including apartheid.

While the fighting in Namibia intensified over the 1980s, there were several Security Council debates over clarifications and amendments of 435, especially concerning ways to draw South Africa into the process. The frontline states, the Contact Group, and SWAPO all agreed that the South African Administrator-General Louis A. Pienaar, and the UN Special Representative Martti Ahtisaari would exercise joint authority over Namibia during the transition period. In addition, the UN attempted to become more impartial by discontinuing General Assembly funds to SWAPO and suspending SWAPO from General Assembly observer status. Constitutional reforms were also agreed to, whereby personnel in the civil service would retain their positions upon independence. This would help to ensure that whites maintain their socio-economic positions in post-independence Namibian society.<sup>21</sup> These provisions were offered in large part to convince the South African government of the UN's commitment to impartial implementation of the peace accord.

By 1988, all sides appeared ready to begin active negotiations again, due in large part to the changing international circumstances and the stalemate on the battlefield in Angola. The USSR and the non-aligned movement, which had five members on the Council in 1988 and seven in 1989, favoured a process whereby SWAPO would have more control over the terms of independence.<sup>22</sup> Considering the fact that in order to pass a Security Resolution there must be at least 9 votes out

of 15 in favour, the divide could have resulted in a deadlock. Rather than trying to secure a Security Council resolution, the ceasefire negotiating process briefly left the UN altogether, reverting back to the domain of the Contact Group.

South Africa insisted on excluding SWAPO from all negotiations, a demand to which the US assented. Subsequently, the Protocols of Geneva and Brazzaville, and the Tripartite agreement were all signed in 1988 by Angola, Cuba, and South Africa, under the mediation of Chester Crocker. These agreements set dates for Cuban and SADF troop withdrawal from Angola, UN verification of the withdrawals, SWAPO deployment to north of the 16th parallel in Angola, and a 'Joint Commission' between Angola, Cuba, South Africa (with the US and USSR as observers) as 'a forum for discussion and resolution of issues regarding the interpretation and implementation of the tripartite agreement'.<sup>23</sup>

These agreements mentioned Namibia only in passing. The US and UK defined the war primarily as a regional one. Once the official ceasefire was signed – but not by the excluded SWAPO – and the Cuban troop withdrawal secured, it was thought that the internal problems in Namibia would basically work themselves out, with minimal UN assistance.

UN assistance re-started when Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar pieced together a ceasefire agreement between SWAPO and South Africa. Each party signed identical letters to Perez de Cuellar, pledging to abide by SC Resolution 435, and the date of 1 April for the ceasefire. To the end, South Africa refused to legitimate SWAPO by signing an agreement directly with the party.

Meanwhile, the Security Council called on the Secretary-General to re-examine the requirements for UNTAG, noting the 'increase in the police and paramilitary forces' since the drafting of the original mandate, some ten years earlier.<sup>24</sup> Implementation of 435 was to be the domain of the UN, and once the military dispute in Angola had calmed down, the US was very reluctant to fund the Namibian operation as extensively as envisaged in the 1978 plan. The US and others argued that the main regional problem had been solved (Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola), and that UNTAG's budget should be cut by halving the UNTAG military component from the original estimate of over 7,500 troops.

In contrast, the non-aligned states argued that the situation on the ground in Namibia had changed for the worse, in that there were many more South African-trained Namibian police and security



forces. They argued that this new ground situation necessitated *more* of an UNTAG presence rather than less. The Secretariat, represented by Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar, split the difference. It recommended that troop levels be kept at the original number in reserve, but that only 4,650 be deployed. The formal ceasefire and implementation start-date was set for 1 April 1989. But the debates in the Security Council and the General Assembly dragged on until 1 March, which meant that UNTAG would not be fully operational until well into May 1989. The budget for the operation was cut from approximately \$700 million to \$416 million, but none of the implementation tasks were removed. By 1 April, UNTAG had only a few representatives on the ground. This helped precipitate the battles of early April, which almost led to the downfall of the operation, as discussed below.

In all, the intensity of Security Council interest in Namibia could be characterized as moderate. While the end of the Cold War ushered in a new ideological consensus, some divisions remained, especially over the definition of the problem. By 1989, the Security Council's interest in Namibia had intensified somewhat, manifest in an increased number of debates and resolutions on the subject, but the increase in attention did not translate into an increase in financial support; rather, the proposed budget was cut nearly in half. The increase in official attention coupled with cuts in financial support indicate only moderate levels of Security Council interest in UNTAG. These moderate levels of interest, while potentially undermining the operation's effectiveness, surprisingly appears to have worked to the benefit of UNTAG. It meant that much of the important day-to-day decision making in UNTAG took place on the ground, in Namibia, in relation to the needs of the operation, rather than at headquarters, in relation to great-power concern over the details of the operation.

### **Organizational Adaptation and Implementation**

Successful organizational adaptation was possible because the leaders of UNTAG were granted wide authority over the general operation, and in particular over the actions of the South African Administrator-General, as detailed in the 1978 'Settlement Proposal'. UNTAG organizers had been involved in the planning of the mission from the outset of the negotiations, and were well versed in Namibian politics and society by the time of the implementation. While UNTAG had a clear and centralized chain of command, it was also spread wide

throughout the vast country, in order to engage the organization directly with its environment. The spread of the organization allowed it to learn about the needs and worries of ordinary Namibians, while teaching them about the coming elections, political parties, and democratic governance.

The three central components of the mission included (1) overall establishment of UNTAG offices, (2) military disarmament and civilian policing, and (3) preparations for, and the holding of, elections.<sup>25</sup> A related but integral component headed by the UNHCR oversaw refugee return.<sup>26</sup> Each of these components confronted crises or changing circumstances on the ground, and dealt with them appropriately, as discussed below.

### *1 April 1989*

The day that the UN operation was to begin, between 300 and 500 PLAN fighters emerged on the Namibian/Angolan border. Koevoet, SWATF and SADF forces began to fire at the PLAN, believing their intentions to be aggressive. SWAPO responded by sending reinforcements southward from Angola, to aid its PLAN fighters. The South African side requested of the UN that SADF forces, many of which had already been restricted to base, be released to fight in the battle. The SADF declared that their forces on the battlefield were outnumbered, that SWAPO was acting in violation of the Geneva Protocol, and that SWAPO's PLAN must be stopped with force. UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Martti Ahtisaari, was in Namibia, but unequipped to take control of the situation. There were not nearly enough UNTAG forces in Namibia to enforce a ceasefire (only 300 military observers had arrived several days earlier); moreover, UNTAG never had the capability to stand between fighting forces. Ahtisaari convinced Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar to allow some SADF and SWATF troops to leave their bases to counter the perceived military attack being waged by PLAN fighters. After nine days of fighting, more than 300 PLAN fighters and civilians and 13 SADF soldiers were killed. It looked as though UNTAG had failed even before it began. After these events, South Africa and SWAPO had reason to pull out of the hard-won agreements, as both had violated those agreements by breaking the ceasefire.

There are three basic arguments as to the cause of the 1 April fiasco; all are in part valid. First, some argue that UNTAG could have prevented the incursion, but that the budgetary and deployment delays

precipitated the event. Second, some SWAPO representatives argue that because SWAPO was not involved directly in the ceasefire negotiations, they were acting under Security Council resolution 435, the original UN peace plan, which indicated that the PLAN troops would be confined to bases both in and outside of Namibia. The PLAN were simply doing what they thought they should, by entering Namibia in order to be confined to base. Finally, others argue that it was simply a lack of compliance on SWAPO's part.

As the fighting wound down, negotiations ensued, with South Africa emboldened by SWAPO's blunder. By 9 April 1989, on Mt. Etjo, several miles to the north of the capital Windhoek, Angolan, Cuban, and South African representatives met with members of the UN (with US and USSR representatives observing), to reconfirm their commitment to the peace agreement.<sup>27</sup> Representatives of the United Nations knew that the SWAPO débâcle in the north would be a perfect excuse for the South Africans to revoke their adherence to 435, ask the UN to leave, and proceed with South African plans for Namibian 'independence'. Presumably, a South African-controlled process would not be fully democratic, and would enable a power shift to the minority in Namibia who were sympathetic to South African rule. The South Africans, however, remained at the bargaining table, signalling to Special Representative Ahtisaari that the South Africans were serious about adhering to the internationally legitimate plan for independence. Apparently, pressure from Prime Minister Thatcher during a visit to Pretoria in early April played a large role in convincing the South Africans to uphold the UN framework.<sup>28</sup> A humbled SWAPO, while not a signatory to the declaration, accepted it. The hasty declaration called for PLAN troops to gather at specific 'assembly points' in Namibia, where they would immediately be escorted to camps north of the 16th parallel in Angola by UNTAG observers and observers from the South African Administrator-General's office. In all, only several hundred PLAN fighters at most ever made it to the assembly points; in the end, over 5,000 were confined to base in Angola.

The crisis appeared at first to weaken the position of the UN, as the non-aligned countries and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), previously strong backers of the operation, began to accuse Ahtisaari of siding with the South Africans. Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar and head of UN peacekeeping, Marrack Goulding received considerable criticism in New York for the way Ahtisaari handled the crisis, and insisted that black African interests be better represented. Headquarters thus proposed that a Deputy Special Representative from

one of the frontline states be added to UNTAG in the field; in a matter of weeks, Joseph Legwaila of Botswana joined the mission, and the internal UN crisis passed rather quickly.<sup>29</sup>

In retrospect, Ahtisaari holds that he was not particularly worried that the UNTAG military component was not on the ground to stand between the two sides during the 1 April crisis. UNTAG was not organized to perform such a task, and the seemingly pro-South African move to allow SADF forces to leave their bases also helped to convince South Africa that the UN was even-handed in its outlook. As a consequence, the South Africans were more willing to compromise with UNTAG and SWAPO during the implementation phase.<sup>30</sup>

#### *Establishment of the UNTAG Offices*

With SWAPO forces withdrawn, and South African forces in Namibia demobilizing, the stage was set to begin the practical tasks of peace implementation. Within a few weeks UNTAG deployed, eventually including 1,500 civilian police, 2,000 civilians, and 4,500 military, from 109 states. UNTAG attempted to accomplish much more than its mandated tasks. Most significantly, the leadership of UNTAG sought to change Namibian *society*, and to interact directly with the Namibian *people*, not simply with the political elites.

#### *Mandate Interpretation*

As early as 1978, Ahtisaari had been intimately involved in designing the operational plan for UNTAG, but was unable to begin actively performing his duties as Special Representative until 1988, due to the delay in Namibian independence. He and his colleagues, after years of visits to Namibia, and interaction with the Namibian elite in exile and South African officials, were in a position to figure out the practical and political aspects of mandate implementation, which were inextricably combined. An unpublished UN report on Namibia explains:

While the central feature of UNTAG's overall mandate was the supervision of free and fair elections for a Constituent Assembly in a transition to independence acceptable to the whole international community, the SRSG [Ahtisaari] had decided that such free and fair elections could take place only if no less than a major change in the overall atmosphere of the country had first taken place; so that the Namibian people could feel free, and sufficiently informed, to express genuine choice as to their future.<sup>31</sup>

Since 1978, Ahtisaari had been pushing for 'a massive active intervention by UNTAG to change the political climate in the country'.<sup>32</sup> In order to achieve success, racial tensions, and military and police violence would have to be curbed through creative means. It was envisaged that UNTAG would:

interpose itself as a source of authentic and objective information in a country which had been starved of this for many years... UNTAG would have, as a condition precedent to its success, to ensure that its legitimacy and authenticity were accepted throughout the country. The establishment of UNTAG's legitimacy, in turn, depended upon the perception of its effectiveness in dealing with the problems confronting the implementation, and upon its reputation for objectivity and integrity. Thus a closely integrated and coordinated operation was required.<sup>33</sup>

The obstacles to achieving these objectives were numerous. The 1.4 million people in Namibia were widely dispersed and disparate. The majority had endured decades of colonial oppression, civil war, racial discrimination, and deliberate campaigns of misinformation. With an approximate 38 per cent literacy rate, the UN had to resort to many creative means to communicate with the population. And of course, the 1 April crisis had increased mistrust on all sides just prior to the UN's full deployment.

#### *Office of the Special Representative*

The first step was to establish UNTAG's physical presence throughout Namibia. This was coordinated and administered through the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (OSRSG). There were three interrelated divisions of the political side of the operation: the OSRSG, UNTAG 'centres', and the information programme.

The OSRSG was responsible for the political direction and overall coordination of the operation. Each morning, representatives of different UNTAG components would meet to share information and discuss strategies. The first meeting of the day was between the main heads of UNTAG – the Special Representative, his Deputy, the Force Commander, the Commissioner of the Police, and the Director of the OSRSG. Top-level political concerns and developments of the last 24 hours would be discussed. The second was a lower-level 'coordination meeting', where Liaison Officers (with the UNTAG Centres, governmental representatives and observer missions) would brief the

UNTAG press spokesman, and military, police, and civilian heads.

It is important to note that almost all UNTAG staff were members of the international civil service who had volunteered for a rotation in UNTAG. Since 1978, Ahtisaari had in mind specific individuals to fill key positions and was able to recruit others over the course of the 10-year delay in implementation. In addition, by the time the operation finally began, Ahtisaari had become the UN's Under Secretary-General for Administration. Thus, he had knowledge of, and access to, the most talented UN staffers.

#### *Relations with the Administrator-General*

Although UNTAG attempted to establish itself as an independent force, it was also set up to monitor the workings of the Administrator-General Louis A. Pienaar's office. While Pienaar's office was the main legal authority in the country, Ahtisaari's office potentially had the power to override decisions, since each step in the independence process 'had to be fulfilled to the satisfaction of the Special Representative'.

The Administrator-General's office sought to thwart UNTAG's operations in a variety of ways, most of which were bureaucratic. For example, the 'Status of Forces Agreement' between South Africa and the UN set out the legal and logistical conditions under which the UN could function.<sup>34</sup> Despite careful advanced planning between the two delegations, South Africa often breached the agreement. UNTAG personnel were often caught up in bureaucratic hassles including being provided with inadequate lodging, facilities, vehicles, and means of communication, as well as being presented with unauthorized customs duties and taxes, and problems securing diplomatic pouches. When such problems could not be solved within Namibia, Ahtisaari would call officials in South Africa and UN headquarters, threatening Pienaar and his administration with political sanction and/or bad press; usually the Administrator-General's office would quickly acquiesce.

#### *Regional and District Centres*

In order to establish UNTAG as a legitimate authority with all Namibians, Ahtisaari's strategy was to have the staff of the 42 district and regional offices interact as much as possible with the local population.<sup>35</sup> They were to strive for 'moral' rather than merely 'executive' authority by helping to create 'a new atmosphere and climate of reconciliation'.<sup>36</sup> In the 'eyes, ears and voice' of UNTAG, as the district and regional centres have been called, staff members knew well the overall mission

objective and the time frame. But other than these restrictions,

Staff were provided with broad guidelines, rather than detailed recipes, on how to execute their functions. This required that district staff initiate and adopt a *modus operandi* which took into account the diversity of their respective areas... Daily reports were fed to Windhoek which not only permitted the flow of information, but also allowed for adjustments in both policy and working methods... Staff were in constant contact with the local population and thus had instant feedback on their own performance permitting adjustment as necessary.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, there was a de-centralized system of interpreters, whereby UNTAG staff were allowed to seek out and hire interpreters on the spot as needed. The combination of well-structured, widely dispersed offices with flexible mandates provided an efficient and legitimating framework for information-gathering and political coordination.

#### *Information Programme*

One of Ahtisaari's most important tactics was to raise public consciousness of what UNTAG was doing and why, as he had 'essentially to build up and rely upon a moral authority rather than direct executive or enforcement powers'.<sup>38</sup> Thus, once in Namibia, he made the information programme an integral part of his office and operation. A mandate for this programme was not specified in any of the settlement documents, but Ahtisaari realized that some type of political information programme would have to be instituted in order to 'change the atmosphere'.<sup>39</sup>

The population was poorly informed and prone to rumour and exaggeration. For example, some white Namibians feared that UNTAG would take over the administration of the territory, redistribute land, and destroy their businesses and communities. Some members of all races were under the impression that UNTAG was a political party. Many were also fearful of voting, as there were rumours not only that the ballot would not be secret, but also that one's hand could be permanently marked or even cut off when it came near the ballot box.<sup>40</sup>

In order to counter the mis- and dis-information, the staff resorted to diverse and creative methods. For example, after church services, UNTAG staff would discuss their operations with thousands of Namibians on a weekly basis.<sup>41</sup> They would also meet with community leaders, unionists, student groups, political groups, traditional groups,

veterinarians' associations, and farmers' unions.<sup>42</sup> Many of these meetings would last up to four or more hours. The staff's tenacity paid off, as 'reports of intimidation decreased, numbers of peaceful political rallies (almost all were monitored by the civilian staff) increased, and dialogue, at all levels, commenced.'<sup>43</sup>

Ahtisaari and his staff also sought frequent contact with local and international radio, television, and newspapers, by holding press conferences every day. But the South West African Broadcasting Commission (SWABC) continued to operate as a source of disinformation. Rather than shutting down the SWABC, UNTAG used SWABC facilities to counteract disinformation on SWABC's own airwaves. Starting in June, UNTAG began running two radio programmes each day, during the peak listening hours, in English, Afrikaans, and 13 other Namibian languages. In all, UNTAG produced 202 radio programs and 32 television programs. The staff also used T-shirts, posters, and skits to relay their messages, producing and distributing approximately 600,000 visual items. Many items included slogans such as 'Namibia: Free and Fair Elections', 'Your Vote Is Secret', and 'It's Your Chance to Choose for Namibia'. More detailed messages explained what political parties were, how to create and join them, the rights of all citizens in a free and democratic society, how citizens should expect to be treated by a legitimate police force, how to register complaints, and step-by step procedures for voter registration and voting.

Within a relatively short period of time – 9 months – UNTAG managed to inform the new citizens of Namibia about what was to happen in the November elections and beyond. 'In moments of tension or crisis, UNTAG used its leverage as impartial observer to promote interaction among the parties and to present factual evidence of the actual situation on the ground.'<sup>44</sup> Ahtisaari maintains that a major reason why he was able to establish a trusting and smooth relationship between UNTAG and Namibians was because he had a trusting and solid relationship with his staff. The Special Representative was also given the power to answer only to the Secretary-General, thus he alone was in total political charge of all aspects of UNTAG. Aside from the decision to appoint a Deputy Special Representative, changes in the operation, and the specifics of how to implement various tasks, were generally the domain of UNTAG in the field, not Secretariat headquarters or the Security Council. Over time, Ahtisaari realized that he needed to increase both the number of UNTAG centres, and the information programme in general, neither of which could have been



determined before the start of UNTAG. Both increases, as well as the substantive uses of the offices, required tremendous commitment and adaptability on the part of the UNTAG staff. Alterations in operations, such as suggestions for new aspects, means, and targets of the information programme, were initiated from the Special Representative's office, based on recommendations he had received through the numerous channels of information available to him. In other words, the UNTAG central offices were managed, and derived their success, primarily from the field, rather than from UN Headquarters.

### *Military Demobilization and Civilian Policing*

The military and policing sections of UNTAG, while less successful at 'over fulfilling' their mandates, did nevertheless accomplish many of their designated tasks, even with reduced financial support for the military component. The most fascinating organizational changes, born of sheer necessity on the ground, were in the civilian policing division, or 'CIVPOL' – never before had the UN sought to perform policing tasks in a peacekeeping operation. This section first addresses the efforts at military demobilization, followed by the innovation of UN civilian police monitoring.

### *The Military Component*

The UNTAG military component had three main tasks: (1) restricting to base and disarming SADF and SWAPO troops, (2) monitoring SADF withdrawal out of Namibia, and (3) demobilizing the Namibian regular and territorial units who fought against SWAPO (mainly the SWATF), dismantling their offices, and collecting and guarding their weapons.<sup>45</sup> At the time of the ceasefire, there were approximately 32,500 non-SWAPO forces to disarm and demobilize, only about half of whom could be withdrawn from Namibia to South Africa. There are no reliable estimates of how many SWAPO forces were in the country, as they were mainly guerrilla troops and moved in and out of the civilian populations essentially without detection.

According to UN Security Council resolution 629 of 16 January 1989, the SADF 'demilitarization' was to follow a strict timetable, including ceasefire and restriction to base by 1 April, and incremental withdrawal to be complete by mid-November, 1989. Despite the partial re-mobilization of SADF forces after the events of 1 April, by mid-May they were confined to base. By November (after the elections), the last troops departed for South Africa.

In the same month, SWAPO's PLAN guerrillas, about 5,000 of whom had been confined to base in Angola, were released and the

camps closed down. The troops wound their way across the border, often as unarmed refugees returning in civilian clothing. Demobilizing the PLAN was far more complicated than the SADF. As Force Commander Prem Chand explained,

Dealing with SWAPO's forces was an entirely different and more difficult exercise. Firstly, as with guerrilla forces in general, PLAN were scattered across extensive areas where there had been fighting, strafing, bombing. They were also extremely well dug-in, in camouflaged bunkers and trenches, i.e., there was no question of clear cut bases, and SWAPO could not provide us with the detailed organizational tables containing the details of personnel, weapons, and ammunition, something that is standard for a regular army.<sup>46</sup>

Rather than attempting to figure out the specifics of where the PLAN functioned, UNTAG set up several bases in Angola, as mentioned above, where PLAN members were grouped, disarmed, and then released as civilians. In other words, UNTAG essentially overlooked the presence of the PLAN in Namibia, in line with South Africa's demands during the drafting of the peace accords. South Africa did not want to legitimate the PLAN by recognizing its existence in an international setting. Fortunately for the UN and the South African Administrator-General, after 1 April, the PLAN did not seek to disrupt the transition process. This was not surprising, as it was in the PLAN's best interest that SWAPO win the elections by non-violent means, so that former combatants could legitimately be re-employed in the Namibian regular army, as many eventually were.

In terms of the task of disarmament, two months before the November elections, most heavy arms were gathered, stored, and transported across the border to South Africa by South African troops accompanied by UNTAG monitors. However, there was no reliable mechanism established to account for small arms.<sup>47</sup> The UN's original plan was to set up collection and storage sites in three or four sections of the country. But in the end, only one large collection site was established in Windhoek, the reasons being that the UN did not have enough resources, its military presence was small, and weapons collection and storage is 'relatively man-power intensive'.<sup>48</sup>

SWATF demobilization was also completed in September, although they continued to receive pay until February 1990. Continued pay was offered as a carrot to allow demobilized troops time to find new employment in Namibia. Often these troops came from less developed

communities, and would rather have remained employed, even under a racist force, in exchange for high salaries. As Harlech-Jones explains,

When the payment of salaries to former permanent soldiers for the SWATF ceased in February 1990, almost ten thousand more men joined the ranks of unemployed and unremunerated Namibians. Many thousands of Namibians had been taught to fight and kill in the South African Army, in the SWATF, and in SWAPO's PLAN. But few had gained skills that could secure their prosperity in peacetime.<sup>49</sup>

By the end of UNTAG's mission, in the 'spirit of reconciliation', PLAN and SWATF forces were integrated in equal numbers into the Namibian army. While up to several hundred remain unemployed today, and periodically small groups unite in demonstrations to demand employment from the SWAPO government, they do not constitute a significant destabilizing force.

Thus, while the major tasks of restricting SADF and PLAN to base, monitoring SADF withdrawal, demobilizing the SWATF, and reintegrating PLAN and SWATF into the Namibian army were basically successfully completed, the tasks of small arms collection, and PLAN demobilization, were left by the wayside. In the case of disarmament, it is believed that more could have been done with greater resources, whereas in the case of demobilizing the PLAN, the task essentially took care of itself.

In general, two processes worked to reduce the centrality of UNTAG's military component. First, the severe decreases in the military budget, due to the decreased military threat. Second, UNTAG's military component was more isolated from Namibian society than its political components, which meant that the military division was less visible and less noted, even though 11 of its members were killed in the line of duty. While the military division did have civilian functions, and fulfilled them well, its presence was overshadowed by the other, more political components of UNTAG.

### *CIVPOL*

In contrast to the concrete military tasks, those of the Civilian Police were vague, and thus more open to re-design during the process of implementation. CIVPOL's tasks were not spelled out in the Settlement Plan, although South Africa essentially agreed to an outline of the idea described only in these terms: 'The Special Representative shall make

arrangements when appropriate for UNTAG personnel to accompany the police forces in the discharge of their duties.<sup>50</sup> The idea of UN civilian policing was born.

The primary functions of these UN 'personnel', later named CIVPOL, as outlined by the Police Advisor Steven Fanning, were to help enforce the law impartially, ensure that people could express their views without fear of harassment or intimidation, and ensure an electoral process that was free from manipulation or interference, by monitoring closely the actions of South West African Police (SWAPOL).<sup>51</sup> Even though one can identify and list these tasks, they overlap and are open to a wide range of interpretations. Further attempts at clarification reveal that CIVPOL was to play a 'civilian', 'political', and 'psychological' role.<sup>52</sup> CIVPOL were placed under direct control of the civilian Special Representative, not the military division. Police functions were 'seen in traditional terms, involving a high level of contact and interaction with the general public, and thus conceptually quite distinct from those of the military'.<sup>53</sup> As for their psychological role, CIVPOL were to 'maximize the visibility of the UN in Namibia. Local people needed to trust that the presence of the UN police would guarantee their freedom of political movement'.<sup>54</sup>

In 1978, the Secretary-General had requested 360 police monitors for approximately 3,000 Namibian police. But by the mid-1980s, the number of police had risen sharply to over 8,000.<sup>55</sup> In addition to the increase in numbers, at the time that the settlement proposal was drafted, the elite Koevoet was not in existence. By 1989, the Koevoet numbered about 3,000 of the 8,250 SWAPOL.<sup>56</sup> Given the change in the situation on the ground, the Special Representative, with the support of the Secretary-General, and the non-aligned and Soviet bloc states on the Security Council, sought to augment UNTAG's civilian police numbers. In January 1989 the number was increased to 500.<sup>57</sup> In the wake of the 1 April events and the purportedly brief re-deployment of some of the Koevoet, the number was further increased by 1,000.<sup>58</sup> And again, in light of persistent police 'intimidation and abuse', especially in the north, another 500 CIVPOL were added in September, to a total of 2,000, just in time for the elections.<sup>59</sup> Governments of 34 UN member states had loaned civilian police. In terms of deployment, 39 stations were set up by May, and 49 by September; 30 of these were in the northern region. Often the CIVPOL were housed near or with the UNTAG district and regional centres, and shared equipment with the military division.

It was clearly difficult to develop CIVPOL, both conceptually and

practically. Most of Namibian society had a deep mistrust of the police, and UNTAG wanted to make sure that it would not be associated with the repressive force. As Colin Leys explains, from 1978 onwards, 'the militarisation of Namibian society had one clear effect on policing: it finally ended any pretence that the police upheld the rule of law.'<sup>60</sup> But UNTAG also was to have 'no direct responsibility for maintaining law and order in Namibia'.<sup>61</sup> UNTAG did not seek to acquire these responsibilities because most of its troops were not familiar enough with Namibian law, society, and languages. CIVPOL needed to be taught by the local police all manner of activities, while simultaneously seeking to impart the principles of 'even-handed', 'non-discriminatory', and democratic policing to their SWAPOL counterparts.

CIVPOL troops would monitor SWAPOL by accompanying them on foot and vehicle patrols, monitoring them during political gatherings, reading their paperwork, and observing their behaviour in police stations. It was important that CIVPOL remain identifiably distinct from SWAPOL, thus they travelled in separate vehicles, flew the UN flag, and wore distinctive clothing. They sought to interact with SWAPOL, and to report any abuse of power first to the UNTAG Station Commanders, District Commanders, the Police Advisor, or finally all the way up the chain of command to the Special Representative.<sup>62</sup> The primary method of oversight was political – SWAPOL officers would be warned by their superiors, sometimes even by officials in South Africa, to desist from wrongdoing or non-compliance with CIVPOL. At one point, the Special Representative had a SWAPOL commander fired, but the threat of, or actual, firing was reserved only as a last resort.

Given the novelty of their task, the quick expansion of the CIVPOL force, and the diverse cultures represented in the CIVPOL, there were of course wide-ranging problems within the operation. For example, approximately one-third of CIVPOL did not have driving skills; there was only one vehicle for every three officers; almost all vehicles were unequipped with communication devices; the radio system for the force was not fully operational until late in the summer; there was often not enough housing for the increasing numbers of CIVPOL; and many did not speak compatible languages with each other, or with the local population. The working language was often Dutch, as Afrikaans and Dutch are fairly mutually intelligible, allowing SWAPOL and CIVPOL at least a minimum level of communication.<sup>63</sup>

Aside from the internal difficulties, and problems with the SWAPOL regular police, CIVPOL also experienced significant resistance from the Koevoet. The only two Security Council resolutions

passed during the UNTAG operation related directly to efforts to stem Koevoet 'paramilitary' and 'counter-insurgency' activity.<sup>64</sup> UNTAG was subject to considerable misinformation about the Koevoet units and deception on the part of the offices of the South African Administrator-General. Koevoet was supposed to have been confined to base or disbanded by December 1988. However, as the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council of 6 October 1989 states:

Although ostensibly members of SWAPOL, many of the ex-Koevoet personnel continued to operate in the same manner as they had before the disbandment of Koevoet. This included the use of armoured personnel carriers known as 'Casspirs' mounted with heavy machine guns. UNTAG received many complaints of intimidation and other unacceptable conduct by ex-Koevoet personnel, and UNTAG police monitors were on a number of occasions themselves witnesses of such behaviour.<sup>65</sup>

In response to Koevoet abuses, a 'Task Force on Koevoet' was created on the suggestion of Special Representative Ahtisaari, and with the approval of Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar and the Security Council. The force was a combined CIVPOL and military effort, which gathered information about Koevoet members and activities. Some suggested that all Koevoet be incarcerated rather than disbanded. Ahtisaari maintained that to do so could potentially cause problems upon their eventual release, and guessed that their less organized, politically unmanaged violence would dissipate over time.<sup>66</sup> While this plan did eventually succeed, on 30 October 1989, just days before the elections, ex-Koevoet units were also disbanded in an official 'demobilization parade'.<sup>67</sup>

Aside from the Task Force on Koevoet, Special Representative Ahtisaari and Police Advisor Fanning created other new divisions within CIVPOL over the course of the operation. For example, they created an 'Investigations Unit' to 'gather information required by the OSRSG on the progress of sensitive cases'.<sup>68</sup> They also created a 'Forward Investigation and Coordination Centre', which countered rumours and gathered information on potential disruptions in the independence process in the north.<sup>69</sup> This centre could be thought of as the functional equivalent of an intelligence unit, except that its mission was to keep the peace rather than fight a war.

Aside from monitoring the police, CIVPOL also escorted refugees back into the country, provided protection for the UNTAG civilian staff, and functioned as election monitors during the elections. In addition,

before and after the elections, they devised a police re-training programme for the new Namibian police force (NAMPOL). The newly constituted police force was to be based on the British model of 'policing by consent', where such principles as a more bureaucratic approach to upholding the rule of law, policing with minimal force, fair treatment, and service, were central. But even given the climate of good will in the post-election period, this transition was extremely difficult.

The problems stemmed from lack of funds and means to re-train or otherwise employ former police and combatants. The UN's four-week training course reportedly produced fewer than 200 police graduates.<sup>70</sup> However, approximately 1000 ex-PLAN and SWAPO members were sent for police training in Zambia. These, along with several thousand others were integrated into NAMPOL, the Ministerial 'Home' Guard, the Border Guard, Protection Officers, and a new National Defence Force. After the UNTAG operation ended in March 1990, about 500 former CIVPOL and military forces stayed on in bilateral arrangements with the new Namibian government to continue to provide security and assist the new government with the creation and training of NAMPOL. Within two years, NAMPOL had essentially changed society's relation to the police – people no longer feared them. There remains, however, widespread criticism of incompetence.

To summarize, the military division of UNTAG had fairly straightforward tasks to carry out. Despite drastically reduced funding, the force was able to accomplish most of the goals set out in its mandate. As for CIVPOL, both its mandate and the methods to fulfil it were more vague, political, and creative. 'The role of the UNTAG police turned out to be far greater than had been envisaged.'<sup>71</sup> There is no doubt that CIVPOL helped enforce the law impartially, ensured that people could express their views free from harassment or intimidation, and safeguarded an electoral process that was essentially free from manipulation or interference.

CIVPOL successfully played its civilian, political, and psychological role, despite substantial problems within the organization of the force, with SWAPOL, and with the Koevoet. The UNTAG police even helped to create new, albeit somewhat unsatisfactory, police–society relations in Namibia, and engendered an important new dimension in UN peacekeeping.

### *Elections*

Holding elections was the central purpose and primary goal of the UNTAG operation. Creating the conditions for, and managing, the

elections was arguably the international community's most important contribution to the process of implementing peace in Namibia. Once UNTAG offices had been established in over 200 locations, police-monitoring mechanisms were in place, refugees resettled, and military demobilization underway, the procedures for the elections unfolded with only a few moments of difficulty, and according to a strict timetable. There were five basic steps in the process: (1) clarification of the legislative framework, (2) registration of voters, (3) registration of parties, (4) the electoral campaign, and finally, (5) the vote itself.

First, fair representation was a hotly debated issue. Early in the negotiations, South African-sympathetic parties had put forth various proposals, which in effect would make white votes carry more weight than black votes. After serious negotiations, Administrator-General Pienaar and Special Representative Ahtisaari struck an agreement, with SWAPO's somewhat reluctant consent. Based on a system of proportional representation, in order to adopt a Constitution, there would have to be a two-thirds majority approval of the Constituent Assembly, rather than a simple majority, as SWAPO had hoped.

Other electoral procedures were drafted by the Administrator-General's office, but they could not be issued without the approval of the Special Representative. This meant that the UN 'ultimately held the upper hand and could always prevail if it was sufficiently persistent'.<sup>72</sup> The rules were then published in the *Official Gazette*, which was in turn widely distributed. Another tool that the UN employed to keep the Administrator-General's office in check was a phrase from a 1989 Security Council resolution that 'all proclamations conform with internationally accepted norms for the conduct of free and fair elections'.<sup>73</sup> At every step, the UN consulted international elections experts whose recommendations were then transmitted to the Special Representative and Administrator-General's offices, pre-empting possibilities for fraud or unfair practices.

Second, concerning the registration of voters, the South Africans were worried that SWAPO would seek to register Angolans who were members of ethnic groups that spanned across the northern border. Similarly, SWAPO was concerned that Namibian refugees might have trouble voting (especially if they were born abroad), and that South Africans might be brought in to weigh the vote to the side of SWAPO's main competitor, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA).<sup>74</sup> In the end, the voting registration rules included provisions for the following: the age limit was set at 18; anyone with one Namibian parent could vote; anyone who had resided in the country for four years and signed



an affidavit that they planned to stay after independence could vote (this meant that 450 South African civilian officials, military and police would participate in the election); anyone born or residing in Walvis Bay could register, but only *outside* of the Bay;<sup>75</sup> and finally, returnees with proper UNHCR documentation were permitted to register.

In order to ensure that as many people as possible were registered, UNTAG and the Administrator-General's office set up 36 permanent registration centres, 33 temporary, 110 mobile registration teams, and 3 helicopters (for remote rural areas), and the registration period was extended for one week.<sup>76</sup> The Administrator-General's office had estimated 685,000 eligible voters, but in the end, over 700,000 registered, or 105 per cent of the eligible population, demonstrating the inaccuracy of the Administrator-General's census predictions.

Third, at the outset, over 45 parties expressed interest in registering. However, in a country with a population as small as Namibia's, it was clear that this number would only foster the creation of a fragmented parliament. Thus, the Administrator-General and the Special Representative agreed to two requirements for party registration: over 2,000 signatures, and a deposit of 10,000 rand (about \$4,500). In the end, ten parties registered, seven of which were voted into the Constituent Assembly.

Fourth, the campaigning began only in late September, delayed by negotiations over the repeal of discriminatory legislation. Under the 1978 Settlement Plan, all discriminatory legislation was to be eliminated before the elections. However, there was considerable resistance to the repeal of AG 8 – the mandate for the controversial Representative Authorities – since many ethnic group representatives argued that this would lead to a chaotic administrative situation just before the elections. Special Representative Ahtisaari, after consultations with legal advisors and SWAPO representatives, agreed to allow some of the laws governing the Representative Authorities to stay on the books for a few more months. As soon as the Constituent Assembly had been established after the elections, AG 8 was repealed.

There were also disputes over incidents of intimidation, harassment, and violent crimes committed by both sides, but mainly by DTA supporters. There were two mechanisms by which campaign-related disputes were settled. First, UNTAG set up regular meetings between the parties to deal with tensions as they arose, before they became disruptive. After the UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar's visit in July, an innovative 'Code of Conduct' was signed between nine of the ten competing parties. Once the code had been distributed,

UNTAG offices would then receive complaints of abuses of the code, and report them to its policing divisions and/or the O'Linn Commission, thus functioning as a de facto legal system. Second, the Administrator-General's office set up a Commission for the Prevention and Combating of Intimidation and Electoral Malpractice, otherwise known as the 'O'Linn Commission', which also investigated complaints and brought cases to trial.<sup>77</sup> These mechanisms apparently functioned well together. As Paul Szaz, former Legal Director of the OSRSG explains, 'Unlike most elections, violence decreased over time, from a high level during the summer preceding the formal campaign to negligible significance immediately before the balloting.'<sup>78</sup>

Despite the overall reduction in violence, there were some rather serious disruptions in the process even up to the time immediately preceding the vote. For example, several days before the elections, South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha held a press conference announcing falsely that SWAPO forces had again amassed on the Angolan side of the border, and were preparing to invade Namibia. CIVPOL, along with the UNTAG military, and district and regional centres, quickly determined that the reports were false, and widely publicized South Africa's duplicity. Also in response, the Security Council issued a statement 'deploring South Africa's false alarm of 1 November, and calling on South Africa to desist from any such further actions'.<sup>79</sup> Unlike the similar-sounding alarm of 1 April 1989, this time UNTAG had information mechanisms in place to establish the veracity of the reports and pre-empt a possible armed clash.<sup>80</sup>

The vote took place between 7 and 11 November 1989. UNTAG staff were at a 4:5 ratio with Administrator-General counterparts at most polling stations. UNTAG employed 1,758 electoral supervisors from the UN system; of these, 358 military served as ballot box supervisors – one for each polling station. In addition some 1,038 police monitors participated with a minimum of two UNTAG police in each polling station.

With 97 per cent voter turnout, of the 72 seats in the Constituent Assembly, SWAPO won 41 and the DTA 21. The remaining 10 seats were divided among five smaller parties. Given that the adoption of a constitution required a two-thirds majority, SWAPO and the DTA would either have to cooperate with each other, or abandon the constitutional process. SWAPO immediately documented its primary ideas, and much to the surprise of all, the DTA accepted the SWAPO proposal as the working draft Constitution. The Constitution was

adopted on 9 February 1990, only 80 days after the convening of the Constituent Assembly. While not a requirement, the Constitution was formulated and adopted by consensus:

Our Constitution is the product of serious internal political negotiations. We debated every aspect until we reached a consensus... we never had to vote on a single issue even though we were a collection of political parties from across the spectrum – a racist party, ACN at one extreme and SWAPO at the other.... Our constitution is at once our victory, our shield, and our guide for the future.<sup>81</sup>

The document is based in large part on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, making it exceptionally broad-minded when it comes to human rights.

There were, however, two major absences from the judicial reform process. First, the Constitution stipulated that no ancestral land claims would be honoured. This has generated continued land alienation and poverty among the large portions of the population that rely on subsistence farming to survive.<sup>82</sup> New legislation to regulate the problems with land reform has been slow to develop; however, land disputes in Namibia remain much less controversial and violent than the battles being waged today in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

The other basic problem concerns the civil service. Civil servants under the South African-controlled administration were for the most part allowed to keep their positions, while the new government has built up its own, parallel structures. This process has been criticized both for creating too large an administration, and as 'an overdrawn policy of national reconciliation'.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, as the Deputy Minister of Trade Wilfried Emvula declared: 'Better to live with a bloated civil service than a war.'<sup>84</sup>

These overdue processes of land and civil service reform are working to create a newly bifurcated country. The political elite has become part of the upper class, while most ordinary citizens still have few possibilities for advancement. Despite these problems, the constitution remains a negotiated document, founded in an atmosphere of 'give and take', which has set the tone for the future of Namibia.

### Namibia since UNTAG

Twelve years after the end of the UN's peace implementation efforts, Namibia is still largely at peace. There is no ongoing widespread

military confrontation, nor is the level of crime or private violence high.<sup>85</sup> According to Freedom House's most recent 2000–2001 ratings (on a 1–7 point scale, one being the most positive), Namibia was given a 2 for political rights, a 3 for civil liberties, and is rated 'free'.

There have been three elections since the one overseen by the UN. In the 1992 regional elections, both SWAPO and the DTA received support from all regions (although SWAPO more so from all), indicating a waning north–south political bifurcation. In the 1994 national elections, President Sam Nujoma, a popular personality among both advocates and foes, won by a wider margin than in 1989, with very high voter turnout.<sup>86</sup> Nujoma ran and won again in the December 1999 elections, after he and his supporters saw through a controversial amendment to change the constitution in order to allow Nujoma to run for a third term. Nujoma has promised not to seek a fourth term.

Namibia's contentious decision to intervene in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the side of Laurent Kabila, in partnership with Angola and Zimbabwe against the Congolese rebels and their UNITA allies, provoked major protests both within and without the country.<sup>87</sup> Most importantly, within Namibia, the move, combined with dissent over Nujoma running for a third term, inspired a split within SWAPO. A new party, the Congress of Democrats, was founded in 1998 mainly by younger members of SWAPO and led by Ben Ulenga, the former Minister of Tourism. Despite its youth, the party fared remarkably well in the December 1999 elections, coming out ahead of the DTA as the second largest party in Parliament. This split can be viewed as a healthy step toward a peaceful opening of the political space in Namibia. The next major step will come 15 years after independence, in the 2005 elections, when, after 40 years, many of SWAPO's top leaders plan to step down. It remains to be seen how the new leadership will manage this next major process of transition.

In terms of the economy, Namibia's GDP has been growing faster since independence than before. Real GDP grew by 5 per cent in 2001, due to increased offshore diamond mining and a new zinc factory. The population is now at about 1.7 million, and GDP per capita stands at approximately US\$1,640.<sup>88</sup> Namibia remains economically dependent on South Africa and economically stratified internally, between a growing rich non-white and white class, and a large poor black underclass. Thus, while the political forms of apartheid have been outlawed, economic divisions persist.

Namibians have had remarkable political successes, many of which

stem from the first elections and constitution drafting, facilitated by the United Nations. In the words of Namibia's Prime Minister Hage Geingob, 'UN diplomacy in Namibia played a major role in the independence process. Namibia today is the child of international solidarity. It's because of the UN connection that we've been so successful.'<sup>89</sup> Moreover, often in peace processes, it is the minority side that feels it has been unjustly treated, and is ready to resume conflict. But as Dirk Mudge, former leader of the DTA opposition party attests: 'When people ask me about political stability in Namibia, I say that I can see no possibility whatsoever of any group, and I am not talking about individuals, wanting to take over the government by any other means than democratic ones. I say this without fear.'<sup>90</sup> Thus, for the most part, the outlook for Namibia remains, in contrast to most post-civil conflict states, decidedly positive.

### Conclusion

In looking to the causes of the successful peace implementation in Namibia, this article has investigated three types of influences over the outcome: first, the context of the civil conflict at the time of implementation; second, external interests, especially the UN Security Council's, in seeing through the operation; and finally, field-level organizational adaptation during the course of implementing the UN mandate. While organizational adaptation was in part enabled by the two types of prior circumstances, if the organization had not been able to adapt, it is unlikely that the operation would have been so successful.

The mission faced several crises, including the SWAPO débâcle on 1 April, resurgence of the Koevoet, and the South African challenge on 1 November, but each of these crises was quickly and adequately defused. The evidence from this case suggests that consent of the warring parties to see through peace implementation is not always present, but can be created and sustained. A second major finding is that, contrary to the common assumption, high levels of Security Council interest do not necessarily make for successful UN peacekeeping operations. At critical moments during the implementation of the peace accord, UNTAG took its cues from local, rather than higher-level political forces. In other words, the implementation was not micro-managed from the political centre in New York. This configuration enabled UNTAG to integrate with its environment, respond directly to the political needs of Namibian society, and carry out a successful operation.

UNTAG's clear, centrally organized command structure was also widely dispersed and allowed for creativity and flexibility on the part of its staff in seeking contact with Namibians. The members of UNTAG accurately assessed problems, and dealt with them through political means by setting up mechanisms to decrease tensions. Many of the innovative strategies devised in the Namibian context – such as civilian police monitoring, the information programme, regional and district centres, and the electoral code of conduct – would later be replicated in other parts of the world, but not nearly with as much mastery as UNTAG in Namibia. The mission sought to create and support rules for the peace consolidation process through the legitimate means of compromise and persuasion, which have set the tone for ongoing political processes in Namibia. While UNTAG's year-long stay did not drastically alter the economic standing of most Namibians, it did tip the balance toward the consolidation of peace and the structures and principles of democratic rule.

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1. 'Multidimensional peacekeeping' encompasses both the traditional peacekeeping task of observing military ceasefires, as well as a broad range of humanitarian and civilian institution-building tasks.
2. Between 1904 and 1908, the Germans committed genocide against the Herero and Nama in response to the groups' armed fight against colonialism. On the genocide, see Faye Caroll, *South West Africa and the United Nations*, Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1967.
3. Brian Harlech-Jones, *A New Thing? The Namibian Independence Process, 1989–1990*, Windhoek: EIN Publications, 1997, p.29.
4. Ronald Dreyer, *Namibia and Southern Africa: Regional Dynamics of Decolonization 1945–1990*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1994, p.109. The DTA garnered significant financial support from South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s.
5. This rule provoked massive protests within Namibia, and a 5,000-person refugee exodus to the frontline states. See *Official Gazette Extraordinary of South West Africa*, 'Proclamation by the Administrator-General for the Territory of South West Africa, No.AG8'. Windhoek, 24 April 1980.
6. Dreyer (see n.4 above), p.161.
7. Reports on these numbers vary widely. These are taken from Lionel Cliffe (ed.), *The Transition to Independence in Namibia*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994, p.33.
8. According to *The New York Times* of 15 January 1989, Koevoet were said to be responsible for approximately 80 per cent of Namibian deaths.
9. In all approximately 11,291 of SWAPO's People's Liberation Army (PLAN) fighters, 2,000 civilians, and 715 South African security forces were killed in the Namibian

- battles, while between 44,000 and 90,000 Namibians were made refugees out of a pre-independence population of 1.4 million. See Willem Steenkamp, *South Africa's Border War: 1966–1989*, Gibraltar: Ashanti, 1989, p.185; Susan Brown, 'Diplomacy by Other Means', in Colin Leys and John S. Saul (eds), *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword*, London: James Curry, 1995, p.37; Herman Ntchatcho, 'Political Amnesty and Repatriation of Refugees in Namibia', in Abdulqawi A. Yusuf (ed.), *African Yearbook of International Law*, Vol.I, Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1993, p.65.
10. Costs were estimated at R 4 billion in 1988. See Robert Price, *Apartheid State in Crisis: Political Transformation in South Africa, 1975–1990*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p.277.
  11. Note that Cuba had upwards of 50,000 troops in Angola, fighting against UNITA.
  12. The first ever 'Western Contact Group' was set up in 1977 to aid in the unsuccessful implementation of an early UN Security Council resolution on Namibia. Its members were the US, UK, France, West Germany, and Canada. For an excellent description of the group's early achievements, see Margaret Karns, 'Ad Hoc Multilateral Diplomacy: The United States, the Contact Group, and Namibia', in *International Organization*, Vol.41, No.1, winter 1987.
  13. The front-line states included Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique, Botswana, and Zimbabwe (since its independence in 1980), plus Nigeria. The group was founded by the Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere with the aim of coordinating African policies on the liberation of Southern African countries.
  14. West Germany was a non-permanent member of the Security Council in both 1978 and 1988 – the two years when many of the significant international debates about Namibia took place.
  15. This was manifest most explicitly in a ten-in-favour (out of 15 total) vote on a resolution to condemn South Africa for holding illegal elections to the Namibian Representative Authorities. In a rare move, the five Council members who were also in the Western Contact Group abstained. See Security Council Resolution 439 of 13 Nov. 1978.
  16. S/12636, para. 5.
  17. S/12827 29 Aug. 1978, part II, para. 20.
  18. Heribert Weiland and Matthew Braham (eds.), *The Namibian Peace Process: Implications and Lessons for the Future*, Freiburg: Arnold Bergstraesser Institut, 1994, p.21.
  19. Chester Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood*, New York: Norton, 1992, pp.63–6.
  20. B. Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War*, London: Norton, 1987, p.307.
  21. S/15287, supplement to Security Council Resolution 435, 12 July 1982.
  22. In 1988, Algeria, Nepal, Senegal, Yugoslavia, and Zambia, all members of the non-aligned movement, were on the Council. In 1989, there were seven non-aligned countries on the Security Council: Algeria, Colombia, Ethiopia, Malaysia, Nepal, Senegal, and Yugoslavia.
  23. 'The Protocol of Brazzaville, 13 December 1988'; 'The Protocol of Geneva, 5 August 1988'. Reproduced in UN Doc. S/20566, 4 April 1989; and 'Agreement Between Angola, Cuba and South Africa, 22 December 1988'. Reproduced in UN Doc. S/20346, 22 Dec. 1988.
  24. Security Council resolution 629 of 16 Jan. 1989.
  25. A separate component of the operation was the office of the 'Independent Jurist'. This person was to oversee the release of political prisoners and detainees, and offer legal advice to the Special Representative when needed. In total, the Independent Jurist oversaw and made recommendations for only 16 cases of prisoners held by South Africa. As for the issue of SWAPO detainees, in the 1970s and 1980s, up to 2,000 SWAPO members were detained by their comrades under suspicion of spying on behalf of South Africa. In 1989, members of the Special Representative's office visited all

- purported sites of detention and found them to be empty. However, this remains a sore political issue even today. See Siegfried Groth, *Namibia: Wall of Silence*, Wuppertal Germany: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1995.
26. UNTAG's mandate stipulated that Namibian refugees must return voluntarily in order for the elections to be considered fair. UNHCR handled the papers for 42,736 returnees. All accounts attest to the remarkable cooperation between UNHCR, UNTAG, SWAPO, the Administrator-General's office, dozens of countries where refugees had been staying, several sister UN organizations (UNICEF, WHO, FAO) and most importantly, the Council of Churches in Namibia.
  27. These were the representatives who made up 'the Joint Commission' established in the Protocol of Brazzaville.
  28. This information comes from Martti Ahtisaari, former President of Finland, interviewed by the author in Kulturanta, Finland, 10–12 July 1998; and Carl von Hirschberg, retired Ambassador of South Africa and former Deputy to the South African Administrator-General, interviewed by the author in Kulturanta, Finland, 11 July 1998.
  29. Sir Marrack Gouling, telephone interview by the author, 1 July 1999.
  30. Interviews with Ahtisaari (n.28 above).
  31. Unpublished UN Report #2, p.14, para. 30.
  32. *Ibid.*, p.6, para. 12.
  33. *Ibid.*, p.6, para. 13.
  34. S/29412/Add.1, 16 March 1989.
  35. The original plan called for nine district centres in the north, but early in the operation it became clear that there were simply too few offices in this populous, war-torn region, so another three were opened (*ibid.*, p.20, para. 42). In all there were 32 district, and ten regional centres.
  36. Ahtisaari, in Weiland and Braham (see n.18 above), p.67.
  37. Unpublished UN Report #2, pp.36–7, paras 75–7.
  38. *Ibid.*, p.38, para. 81.
  39. For a more complete analysis of the information programme, see Ingrid Lehmann, *Peacekeeping and Public Information Caught in the Crossfire*, London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1999, pp.28–50.
  40. Nangolo Mbumba, Minister of Finance, interviewed by the author in Windhoek Namibia, 23 July 1998. After voting, UNTAG did stamp people's hands with indelible ink, visible only under ultraviolet light, in order to prevent people from voting twice.
  41. Approximately 90 per cent of Namibians are Christian, and many attend church regularly.
  42. See Christopher Wren, 'Outjo Journal: UN Namibia Team Makes Some Unlikely Friends', *New York Times*, 19 January 1990.
  43. Unpublished UN Report #2, p.34, para. 70.
  44. *Ibid.*, p.32, para. 66.
  45. Four subsidiary tasks included (1) transferring SADF civilian functions (in communications, schools and hospitals) to parts of UNTAG, and then to the new Namibian government, (2) providing communications, security and logistics for the UNTAG civilian and military components, (3) monitoring borders, and (4) ensuring the security of returning refugees and exiles.
  46. Prem Chand, former Force Commander of UNTAG, in Weiland and Braham (n.18 above), p.93.
  47. There is widespread belief today that many of the small arms used to fight the war are still in the population.
  48. Chand, in Weiland and Braham (n.18 above), p.99.
  49. Harlech-Jones (n.3 above), p.32.
  50. S/12636, 10 April 1978, para. 9.
  51. Steven Fanning, in Weiland and Braham (n.18 above), p.104.
  52. Unpublished report No.2, p.58.



53. Ibid., p.58 para. 141.
54. Ibid., para. 142.
55. R. Jaster, *South Africa in Namibia: The Botha Strategy*, London: Macmillan, 1990, pp.41 and 75.
56. Unpublished UN Report #2, p.64, para. 158.
57. S/20412 of 23 January 1989 in response to Security Council Resolution 629 of 16 Jan. 1989.
58. S/20658 of 26 May 1989, and Security Council Resolution 640, 9 Aug. 1989.
59. S/20872 of 28 Sept. 1989, and Security Council Resolution 643 of 31 Oct. 1989.
60. Colin Leys, 'State and Civil Society: Policing in Transition', in Leys and Saul (eds) (n.9 above), p.135.
61. Unpublished UN Report #2, p.57 para. 140.
62. SWAPOL attempted to thwart CIVPOL's activities by using a wide variety of methods. For example, SWAPOL would not provide accurate patrol schedules or rosters, hide information, and play 'cat and mouse' games such as driving over terrain that they knew CIVPOL vehicles could not handle.
63. English was also widely spoken within UNTAG, and increasingly so in Namibia. English is now the national language of Namibia.
64. Security Council Resolutions 640 and 643 of 1989 demanded Koevoet disbandment.
65. S/20883
66. Weiland and Braham (see n.18), p.114.
67. But of course the problems with Koevoet did not end there. Throughout the election period there were reports of intimidation by 'DTA supporters' who were former members of the Koevoet. After the elections, the ex-Koevoet were widely vilified.
68. Unpublished UN Report #2, p.74, para. 191.
69. Ibid., para. 192.
70. Leys, 'State and Civil Society' (n.60 above), p.138. Reported in *The Namibian*, 13 March 1990.
71. Steve Fanning, in Weiland and Braham (n.18 above), p.103.
72. Paul Szaz, *ibid.*, p.143.
73. *Ibid.*, p.143.
74. Note that in the final vote, one of the most eyebrow-raising outcomes was in a district not bordering Angola, but South Africa, where 263 per cent of the estimated eligible voters registered. Cliffe (n.7 above), p.124.
75. Ownership of Walvis Bay, Namibia's only deep-water port, was a deeply dividing issue. The UN recognized the port as South African territory in resolution 435, but in 1994 it reverted to Namibia.
76. The UNTAG electoral teams consisted of 238 election supervisors to monitor their Administrator-General's office counterparts on a 1:1 ratio.
77. Named after its chairman, Bryan O'Linn, then an Acting Judge of the High Court. This commission also worked with the Churches Information and Monitoring Services (CIMS), which compiled hundreds of election-related abuses. Bryan O'Linn, interviewed by the author in Windhoek Namibia, 29 July 1998.
78. Szaz (n.18 above), p.150.
79. *Yearbook of the UN, 1989*, Vol.43, p.804.
80. In another example, Anton Lubowski, the most prominent white member in the SWAPO leadership was shot to death in front of his house on 12 September 1989.
81. Gurirab, in Weiland and Braham (n.18 above), pp.171-2.
82. Wade Pendleton, Professor of Sociology, University of Namibia, interviewed by the author in Windhoek Namibia, 30 July 1998. See also Gretchen Bauer, *Labor and Democracy in Namibia, 1971-1996*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998.
83. Weiland and Braham (n.18 above), p.176.
84. Wilfried Emvula, Deputy Minister of Trade and Finance, interviewed by the author in Windhoek, Namibia, 28 July 1998.
85. Crime in Windhoek is reportedly on the rise. There have also been low-level disputes

in the Caprivi Strip and on the border with Angola. From September 2000 to the present, Namibian Defence Forces have battled sporadically with UNITA fighters who come into Namibia to rob Namibians. These disputes, however, do not suggest that Namibia might relapse into civil war, nor do they suggest that Namibia might go to war with UNITA.

86. Robert Rotberg, 'Elections in Namibia Point Toward Stability', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 25 January 1995.
87. Namibia withdrew its 2,000 troops in June 2001, after the signing of the Lusaka Peace Accord.
88. All figures in the paragraph come from *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, 2000–2001.
89. Hage Geingob, interviewed by the author, Windhoek Namibia, 30 July 1998.
90. Dirk Mudge, in Weiland and Braham (n.18 above), p.164.