Chapter 8: Consequences of Failed Demobilisation-Reintegration in South Africa:

Consequences of Failed Demobilisation-Reintegration in South Africa: The Development of a “Former Combatant” Political Identity

8.1 Introduction

The consolidation and sustainability of democracy in South Africa depends in part on how the government deals with the legacy of thirty years of war and militarisation in the region. The successful disarmament and effective reintegration of demobilised soldiers into civilian society is a crucial aspect of this challenge. The main argument of this chapter is that while the process of establishing democratic control over the armed forces was relatively successful, the demobilisation of former APLA and MK soldiers was introduced without adequate planning and was badly executed. Consequently, the process has not managed to facilitate the reintegration of former APLA and MK soldiers into civilian society with demilitarised social identities and access to economic opportunities. Demobilised soldiers may threaten the consolidation of democracy in South Africa and destabilise the region. The proliferation of light weapons throughout the region and the lack of effective disarmament at the end of the armed conflict in South Africa makes the potential not only for violent crime but also for serious political and social disruptions more probable.
To substantiate the argument, this chapter focuses on two themes in the broader process of military restructuring, democratic control of armed forces in post-apartheid South Africa and evidence of a failed demobilisation-reintegration process. The latter includes a discussion of the adoption of “former combatant” as a new political identity and former APLA and MK combatants’ involvement in criminal activities.

8.2 Democratic Control over the Military in South Africa

8.2.1 The Role of the Joint Standing Committee on Defence

The disarmament and demobilisation of soldiers is part of a broader process of restructuring the armed forces. The process includes a determination of the size, composition and role of the armed forces, as well as the implementation of mechanisms to assure democratic control. All these are part of the establishment of a new pattern of civil-military relations. In Chapter 3, it was argued that the process of establishing democratic civil-military relations was problematic and unsuccessful in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, while in Namibia some relative success was achieved. In South Africa, the process involved the inclusion of the roles and functions of the national defence force in the Constitution (Interim Constitution, Act 200 of 1993).55

Previously the role and tasks of the national defence force were only spelled out in the Defence Act (No. 44 of 1957) and supplemented by other laws. The Interim Constitution (1993) specified that the President was Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, clarified the respective roles of the military, and entrenched a civilian secretariat for the military. The final Constitution (1996) made provision for multi-party parliamentary committees to have oversight of all security services for purposes of transparency and accountability (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Section 199(8)).

---

55 Schedule 6 of Section 24(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) provided that Sections 82(4)(b), 215, 218(1), 219(1), 224 to 228, 236(1), (2), (3), (6), (7)(b) and (8), 237(1) and (2)(a) and 239 (4) and (5) of the Interim Constitution (Act 200 of 1993) continue in force as if the previous Constitution had not been repealed. Thus, in some cases, where the provisions are not clearly spelled out in the final Constitution, reference will be to the Interim Constitution, especially Sections 224 to 228 which contain provision for the national defence force.
The roles and functions of the multi-party parliamentary committees were spelled out in the *Interim Constitution* (1993), most notable being the Joint Standing Committee on Defence (JSCD) which was mandated: “to investigate and make recommendations on the budget, functioning, organisation, armaments, policy, morale and state of preparedness of the National Defence Force and to perform such other functions relating to parliamentary supervision of the Force as may be prescribed by law” (*Interim Constitution* 1993, Section 228(3)(d)). There was also an attempt to establish a new pattern of civil-military relations. As argued in Chapter 2, this refers to the hierarchy of authority between the Executive, Parliament and the armed forces, and to civil supremacy over these forces. Another innovation is the “clustering” of various ministries into Cabinet committees; the two key clusters for security governance are International Relations, Peace and Security (IRPS) and Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS).

The basic division of labour is that the IRPS is responsible for external security and the JCPS for internal security, although there is some overlap of membership and issues. Day-to-day management of security is also carried out by the Inter-Ministerial Security Committee (IMSC), involving the relevant ministers. In addition, a National Security Council, consisting of senior ministers and officials, has been set up to make key decisions on high-impact security issues, be they internal or external (Cawthra, 2005b: 96).

A clear division of labour was established between the Minister of Defence, the Secretary of Defence and the Chief of the SANDF. The Minister of Defence was recognised as the political head of the Department of Defence, and was responsible for political supervision of the Department, communicating its needs to the political authorities, and approving defence policy, budgets and programmes. The Secretary for Defence was given responsibility for the formulation of defence policy, acting as the chief accounting officer to Parliament, managing the acquisitions process and liaising with the legislature (Cawthra, 2003: 39-40). Section 225 of the *Interim Constitution* (Act 200 of 1993) gave the Chief of the SANDF executive military command of the armed forces. This command was to be exercised under the direction of the Minister of Defence in times of peace and under the direction of the President during a state of national defence.
The Minister of Defence was accountable to Parliament and Cabinet for the SANDF, and Parliament was given a range of significant powers regarding military affairs in order to assert democratic control over the armed forces and defence policy. This included legislative powers, approval of the defence budget, and reviewing the President's decisions to deploy the SANDF in critical functions. The most significant innovation was the creation of the post of Military Ombudsperson, whose main duties were to monitor adherence to democratic civil-military relations, to undertake investigations at the request of Parliament, and to investigate complaints against the SANDF by military personnel and members of the public. It was envisaged that the ombudsperson would be an independent official, appointed by and accountable to Parliament. An example of the work of the office of the military ombudsperson was when the Ombudsman, Mr. Justice P.J. van der Merwe, recommended in March 1995 that 911 naval personnel retrenched by the South African Navy five years before, should get compensation totalling R41 million, and this was accepted by the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Defence (The Citizen, 08.03.1995). The office of Military Ombudsman, located in the Office of the Public Protector, is currently under review because it is not functioning optimally (Heinecken, 2005).

8.2.2 An Evaluation of Democratic Control over the Armed Forces

Since its inception the Joint Standing Committee on Defence (JSCD) has attempted to exercise its control over the armed forces. Two examples of this are worth mentioning. First, in 1995 the Minister of Defence presented his plans to buy second-hand ships and submarines for the South African Navy. “The committee not only questioned his decision to buy second-hand ships and submarines, but also declared that the very legitimacy of the defence force needed to be tested before new acquisitions of this scale could be approved” (Modise, 2004: 45). Second, the contested use of Afrikaans as the language of command-and-control was taken to the JSCD.

After much deliberation the committee recommended that English be used, as most members of the newly integrated South African National Defence Force (SANDF) could understand it. This was challenged by the Department of Defence and the chief of the SANDF requested the president to overrule Parliament. President [Nelson]
Mandela tried to get the chairperson of the JSCD to back down, only to be told that the decision rested with the committee as a whole, and not with the chairperson. Ultimately the president discussed the matter with the committee. The result is that the decision of the JSCD remains unchanged until today. The Minister of Defence and the department learned that Parliament could use its powers, without fear, if it wanted to (Modise, 2004: 45, emphasis added).

However, while the two cases served as evidence of the parliamentary control of the armed forces in South Africa, civil-military relations faced challenges at both the parliamentary level and within the Department of Defence. Modise (2004) identifies a number of challenges to democratic control over the armed forces at the level of Parliament. Four of these are worth mentioning. First, defence forces are often characterised by some limits to transparency for the sake of national security. While South Africa has developed some mechanisms of civilian oversight, the extent to which this can be practised is limited. This was because of a provision that stated that defence policy and military activities “shall be sufficiently transparent to ensure meaningful parliamentary and public scrutiny and debate, insofar as this does not endanger the lives of military personnel or jeopardise the success of military operations” (White Paper on Defence, 1996: 4). However, as Modise (2004) argues, it is not always easy to define clearly when this position has been reached. Second, while members of Parliament had an opportunity to identify policy and legislation gaps and to draft recommendations to remedy such gaps, the challenge was to create enough capacity and confidence among members so that they actually utilised the opportunity to do so (Modise, 2004). Third, while there was democratic control over the armed forces, the separation of policy from operations was evident in the division of labour between the Secretary for Defence and the Chief of the SANDF. As stated above, while the Secretary for Defence and Members of Parliament were responsible for policy formulation, the Chief of the SANDF translated military policy into strategies, plans, budgets and programmes.

Convention holds that MPs should not meddle in operational matters. There is obviously a fine line between policy and operational practice. When elected civilians do not extend or exercise their oversight and control far enough, human rights and other abuses may occur. The executive often gives the security forces mandates with
general objectives. Those mandates are often valid from the national security perspective but may end up being unconstitutional. For example, the South African Constitution prohibits torture and therefore any result or information obtained by means of torture would not be acceptable (Modise, 2004: 51).

The fourth challenge facing democratic control of the armed forces was around the defence budget system. Modise (2004) argues that parliamentary committees need to understand the defence budget processes, and must therefore develop enough skills to analyse, monitor and advise on defence expenditure. “There is nothing as dangerous to democracy as an ignorant MP…” (Modise, 2004: 53). Furthermore, there is a need to develop clear guidelines for expenditure, which must be set and understood by both the military and those who exercise control over the military. Within the Department of Defence, while the division of labour was clear in theory, in practice it proved difficult to implement (Cawthra, 2000b; 2003). This was partly because between 1967 and 1995 no civilian outside of Cabinet had influence over the military (Heinecken, 2005).

South Africa had had no defence secretariat since 1966, when it was abolished after decades of acrimonious dispute between it and the defence force. Civilian expertise in this field was thus very limited… most of those involved were in fact serving officers or members of MK. In practice, a large percentage of the staff brought into the secretariat were military officers who removed their uniforms and moved sideways from the SANDF (Cawthra, 1997a: 62).

In August 1997 the Secretary of Defence Pierre Steyn complained that he was failing in his task of establishing civilian control of the military because government regulations were preventing him from hiring non-military staff56 and because civilians in his secretariat were not in control of budgets (Mail and Guardian, 15.08 – 22.08.1997). There was also some evidence of the reluctance of SANDF officers to support the defence review process. For example, none of the SANDF generals were present during the defence review consultative conference held in Cape Town in February 1996 (The Star, 19.02.1996).

56 At the time, a Cabinet moratorium blocked the appointment of public servants to new posts.
At another level, there was no strong, mass-based demilitarisation movement to
challenge the power of the defence establishment. As argued in Chapter 2, there
cannot be deep demilitarisation unless civilians take issue with militarisation, question
militarised perceptions and build up a counter-force to militarised institutions (Clark,
2000). “Healthy civil-military relations require the empowerment of civil society to
engage with defence issues, to challenge insider security expert assessment of security
needs and budget justification” (Cock, 1998a: 24). While a few NGOs specialising in
defence and security have grown substantially in terms of their policy research
capacity, it is unclear to what extent they influence government policy (Cawthra,
2005b). Thus, while attempts to secure public participation in the defence review
process were extensive, “consultation was in fact shallow, limited and involved only
77 submissions from civil society organisations. Partly because of the secrecy in
which defence and security issues were shrouded under apartheid, civil society lacked
the capacity to challenge the military…” (Cock, 2004: 4). In some working groups,
non-governmental organisations “were largely absent, and in the more technical
groups SANDF officers and defence officials clearly had the advantage of
information. This is particularly true of the working group dealing with force design.
The SANDF had developed a sophisticated computer modelling programme, Project
However, the defence review process was a remarkably transparent and consultative
process (Cawthra, 1999, 2000a, 2000b). The degree of transparency and
accountability compared favourably with that of advanced democracies (Cawthra,
1998).

However, despite all the challenges identified above, compared to its Southern
African neighbours South Africa has succeeded in building a new pattern of civil-
military relations. While national experiences of the restructuring of civil-military
relations differed, there were three obstacles to the establishment of democratic civil-
military relations in Southern Africa. The first was that in all the countries
reconciliation was not central to the termination of armed conflict. As a consequence
members of former warring armies were often integrated into a new national defence

\(^{57}\) On May 7, 1996, the team of the SANDF and Deloitte and Touch was awarded the prestigious 25th
International Franz Edelman Award for the development of Project Optimum. This award is the world
championship of Operations Research and Management Sciences, and is presented by the Institute for
Operations Research and Management Science (INFORMS) based in the USA (CSANDF, 1996).
force with antagonistic military identities intact. This often led to skirmishes between former members of different armies (Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe). Second was the absence of effective democratic institutions, largely due to the sectarian interests of political elites (Mozambique and Zimbabwe). Third, the persistence of previous civil-military relations between the liberation organisation and its armed wing often hampered the establishment of democratic civil-military relations (Mozambique and Zimbabwe). Another feature that was common of military restructuring in Southern Africa was that it rarely involved either effective disarmament or economic and social reintegration of demobilised combatants. This latter refers to a process of assisting demobilised soldiers return to their civilian communities with demilitarised social identities that include access to economic opportunities and supportive social networks. Instead, many ex-combatants throughout the region have exhibited a sense of marginalisation and social dislocation.

8.3 A Failed Demobilisation-Reintegration Process

8.3.1 The Concept of Identity

In Chapter 1 demobilisation was described a multi-staged process of converting soldiers to civilians, which encompasses the release of soldiers from a statutory force or guerrilla group and their reintegration into civilian society. This means that the process involves altering the social identity of a soldier into that of a civilian. Identity is a person’s sense of who they are, of what is important about them (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000: 885). While it is individuals who have identities, identity is a social construction. It is context-bound; that is, it is related to the social groups to which the individual belongs and with which they identify and interact. It involves making comparisons between people and therefore establishing similarities and differences between them. “Identity depends on a sense of difference which distinguishes ‘us’ from ‘them’ ” (Cock, 1997b: 71, 1998b: 124). All identities operate through exclusion, and the lines of “difference” imply the boundaries of identity (Cock, 1998b).

Identity operates at three different levels – passive identities, active identities, and political identities (Bradley cited in Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). Passive
identities are “potential identities”. The potential exists for them to become important, in the way that individuals see themselves and others see them, but the identity is lying largely dormant. Active identities are those which individuals are conscious of, and which provide a base for their actions. Bradley argues that an active identity refers to positive elements for an individual’s self-identification, although people do not necessarily think of themselves continually in terms of a single identity. Political identities provide “a more constant base for action and where individuals constantly think of themselves in terms of an identity”. Such identities are formed through political action, through campaigns highlighting the importance of the identity and using it as a basis for organising collective action. The implication of this argument is that an identity may remain passive for many years, with the potential to become a political identity. This is because social factors such as poverty and unemployment tend to bring certain identities to prominence while reducing the significance of others.

The challenge for those managing demobilisation is to ensure that the “former combatant” identity becomes a passive identity, and this can only be achieved through effective disarmament and reintegration programmes. However, while social identity is important for an analysis of demobilised soldiers, it is not adequate to capture the complexities of the relationship between demobilisation-reintegration and soldiers’ potential involvement in crime and social disruption. Analysis should involve exploring individual biographies, motives and meanings, examining cultural frameworks, group attachments, social practices, social processes, institutions and organisations that shape or reinforce identities and, by implication, behaviour. In South Africa this means exploring how the liberation struggle and the integration process shaped identities.
8.3.2 The Liberation Struggle, Integration and Identity Formation

The struggle for liberation created two opposing militarised identities – the defenders of apartheid (mainly the SADF) on the one hand, and the freedom fighters (APLA and MK) on the other. Given the antagonistic nature of these identities, the suspension of the armed struggle and the move towards a negotiated settlement required a process of transforming these militarist identities into a peaceful national identity for the sake of national unity and reconciliation.

Extensive evidence of the failure to reconcile the antagonistic militarist identities was experienced in January 1994. As stated in Chapter 4, for the purposes of maintaining order during the elections the National Peace-Keeping Force, which among others consisted of former MK and SADF members, was established. Training began on January 24, but on January 29 MK members threatened members of the SADF and SAP, and danced and sang into the early hours of the morning (Cilliers and Reinhardt, 1995).

The process of integration to form the SANDF provided an opportunity to reconcile the antagonistic militarist identities. At a symbolic level all armed forces ceased to exist on the midnight of April 26/27, 1994, thus bringing into existence the new SANDF. According to the Interim Constitution (Act 200 of 1993), all members whose names appeared on the CPR of their respective armies were members of the SANDF. In essence, this meant that the different formal identities (APLA, MK, TDF, VDF, BDF, CDF and the SADF) ceased to exist. Anyone whose name was on the CPR had to adopt the “SANDF” identity. However, instead of reconciling identities, the process of integration reinforced old identities. As stated in Chapter 5, during integration former APLA and MK soldiers went through a process of assessment before they were formally accepted into the SANDF. During this process, former members of the SADF and TVBC forces remained in their ranks and positions, as if they were not part of the integration process. The discourse of the time, which referred to Statutory Forces (former SADF and TVBC forces) and the Non-Statutory Forces (former APLA and MK), reinforced the two antagonistic identities.
In Chapter 5, reference was made to protest action by former APLA and MK soldiers who were not satisfied with the conditions surrounding integration. This was an indicator of a strong political identity which former MK soldiers had begun expressing before the integration process. In August 1993, disgruntled unemployed former MK soldiers occupied the ANC’s Durban office to highlight their plight (*Mail and Guardian*, 19.08.1993). The identity was further expressed during the integration process. For example, during an integration-related protest action by former APLA and MK soldiers in October 1994, former MK soldiers threatened to start a campaign to cripple the economy if their demands were not met. “The ANC taught us to cripple the economy and if it does not meet our demands we will use the tactics it taught us” (*Saturday Star*, 15.10.1994). The fact that former MK soldiers in seven provinces refused to return from leave and that they delivered petitions to the ANC in Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein, Polokwane and Nelspruit (*The Weekly Mail and Guardian*, 07.10 – 13.10.1994) was an indicator that they were drawing on their identity as “former combatants” to raise their grievances. The political identity was also expressed by those who had joined the SANDF, evident in the fact that in 1995 former APLA and MK soldiers serving in the South African Air Force (SAAF) threatened to revolt if they were not promoted to senior positions (*The Star*, 06.10.1995).

The discussion above suggests how identity is formed and reinforced through social interactions and processes. If properly planned, demobilisation becomes a process of transforming identity. However, when introduced without adequate planning, as was the case in South Africa, demobilisation may serve to deepen identities. The *Interim Constitution* (Act No. 200 of 1993) provided for three phases in the formation of the SANDF – namely integration, consolidation and rationalisation. It was envisaged that integration would be followed by consolidation which included the completion of bridging training by former APLA and MK members and the completion of the staffing process. The final phase, the reduction of the size of the SANDF (known as rationalisation), would commence only after the completion of the first two phases. However, once the process of integration began, it became evident that some former APLA and MK soldiers could not be integrated into the SANDF. These were the aged (some as old as 65), the sick (including the disabled) and those without the required educational qualifications. The JMCC had anticipated that these categories could not
be integrated, but was not empowered to take decisions on matters such as demobilisation. Thus, the demobilisation of former APLA and MK soldiers began without adequate planning.

Demobilisation was a process to exclude former APLA and MK soldiers, who could not or were not interested in joining the SANDF, from the process of integration. It differed from the envisaged reduction of the size of the integrated SANDF known as rationalisation, which would affect members from all former forces. The fact that demobilisation applied exclusively to former APLA and MK soldiers deepened a sense of marginalisation among those affected. However, unlike their former comrades-in-arms who felt marginalised in the SANDF, the demobilised soldiers felt marginalised in the civilian society. Hence, they remained in coherent groups with militarist identities. This was largely because the demobilisation of former APLA and MK soldiers was introduced without adequate planning and was not accompanied by effective reintegration programmes. Evidence showed that due to failed demobilisation-reintegration, former APLA and MK combatants had drawn on their “former combatant” identity and this had become a political identity.

Over the past few years, since the first democratic elections, individuals claiming to be MK/APLA ex-combatants have been involved in or planned protest and/or civil disobedience actions. These actions were largely motivated by the need of the individuals concerned to highlight their grievances. This was a clear indication that many ex-combatants had become marginalised politically, as these forms of action are typically used by people who perceive themselves to be powerless. The sense of marginalisation was expressed in Gear’s (2002) study, in which one former MK soldier argued that “‘Forgotten’ is an understatement; we have been wished away” (a former MK soldier cited in Gear, 2002: 21). In 2000, former MK soldiers from Orange Farm had planned to blockade the Golden Highway next to Orange Farm (south of Johannesburg) on June 16, to demand jobs. However, the blockade never took place for two reasons. First, some former MK soldiers within the group felt that others would use the opportunity to commit crime:

*Our idea was positive because, it was not against the government; it was simply to say: ‘government remember us, we are still hungry’. Others came...*
with negative ideas and said things like ‘what is happening in Zimbabwe is good; why can’t we do it?’ If we do what war veterans are doing in Zimbabwe, we will end up pushing ourselves into a situation that we do not like. We realised that some people would use the opportunity [the highway blockade] to rob people of their money (Interview with a former MK combatant, Orange Farm, 15.08.2000).

Second, the Head Office of the ANC was informed of the planned action, and thus the “leadership” requested the “comrades to be patient as their concerns would be addressed”. Even though this information was not verified, ex-combatants abandoned their plan. In November 2000, City Press reported that a group of about 100 former APLA and MK combatants threatened to block tourists, target government buildings and cars, and evict government employees in the Western Cape’s black townships if the government did not respond to their demands for employment. The former soldiers were marching under the name of Peninsula Anti-Crime Agency (PEACA), and threatened to join the Western Cape vigilante groups, Qibla and People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) (City Press, 26.11.2000). Late in December 2000, a group of former MK soldiers from Orange Farm, discussed above, were planning to take a white farmer next to Orange Farm hostage on January 4, 2001, in order to alert President Thabo Mbeki to the plight of ex-combatants. “Our aim is not to harm the farmer but to warn the president about our ability to cause chaos if our needs are not addressed” (Interview with a former MK combatant, Orange Farm, 24.12.2000). It seems the plan was forgotten during the festive season as nothing happened on the date identified for the protest action. In August 2001 former MK soldiers in Gauteng (including the Orange Farm contingent) marched on the head office of the ANC in Johannesburg to protest at government’s “negligence” towards them (Sowetan, 23.08.2001). All these actions were indicators of the lack of reintegration into civilian communities. Commenting on protest action by former combatants in Namibia in 1997, Phineas Aluteni said:

The fact that the ex-combatants can, after nearly eight years of having been demobilised, still come together in large groups within a few minutes says a lot. It is an indication that they have not yet fully re-integrated in society. In other words, they are on ‘alert’ at all times. They remain the most organised group in society and are
able to respond to a call to come together at very short notice (cited in Kingma, 2004a: 144).

The political identity of former MK soldiers was linked to the absence of social reintegration. As stated in Chapter 7, some former MK soldiers were unable to operate outside the social relations they had with ANC and MK leadership during the armed struggle. They preferred to operate within MK command structures for everything, including non-organisational issues. Thus, in some cases ex-combatants were not prepared to discuss their personal experiences, or socio-economic conditions without consulting ANC/MK structures. For example, in an attempt to prove that the Service Corps was a success, General Masondo advised the author to interview a former trainee. The latter refused to be interviewed and argued that “I can’t talk to you unless my General tells me to do so”. This illustrates the persistence of hierarchical social relations within MK.

As discussed in the Methodology section, in the North West Province, MK soldiers who had invited the author to interview them demanded that he first get approval from the MKMVA provincial office in Mafikeng. They went as far as arguing that if anyone came up with money or a promise of starting an income-generating project targeting ex-combatants, they would reject it if it did not go through MKMVA structures. Similar evidence of the persistence of former identities and social relations was experienced in Namibia when former PLAN soldiers turned down jobs, arguing that it might be disloyal to SWAPO if they simply found work on their own (World Bank, 1993). In Gauteng Province, those who were suspicious of the author’s intentions argued that they had to be careful, because “the CIA is everywhere”. In explaining the behaviour of former MK soldiers, Mr. Cholo, the former Provincial General Secretary of MKMVA in Limpopo Province (and a former MK commissar), argued that MK combatants were taught to listen to their conscience. Thus, when in doubt, any MK combatant had to seek a second opinion by calling his/her comrade before talking to strangers. In most cases this meant seeking the opinion of a commander or commissar.

In Limpopo Province there was another explanation for the behaviour of former MK soldiers. First, most former MK members were reluctant to participate in an interview
because, it was argued, information such as the personal predicaments of individual respondents could be used by sinister forces to discredit the ANC leadership. The fear was that MK military intelligence would be able to identify the source of the information and the individual might be marginalised within ANC structures. Another reason expressed by one informant was: “Unfortunately in Limpopo Province the government is the source of wealth. The problem in our province is that resources are limited and the demand is high. Thus no one would like to spoil their chances of getting access to resources” (Personal conversation with Freddy Ramaphakela, Polokwane, January 2002). Ramaphakela stated that another reason for the behaviour of former MK soldiers was that there were rumours that the Office of the President of the ANC had commissioned people to interview ex-MK soldiers to investigate their loyalty to the ANC. The conclusion drawn by the informant was that most MK ex-combatants would not, therefore, be completely honest in their responses. It is worth noting that Ramaphakela himself agreed to be interviewed but disappeared until the author left Limpopo Province.

8.3.3 Demobilisation-Reintegration and the Recurrence of Armed Conflict

The resettlement and reintegration of ex-combatants could have an impact on the reoccurrence or development of conflicts. Six factors are important in determining whether the cessation of armed conflict is sustained. The first is the political and institutional environment. As Kingma (2004a; 2004b) observes, the progress and impact of demobilisation and reintegration depend to a large extent on the political and institutional environment in which they occur. In cases where there is hardly a state or any external power to keep parties to their agreement, demobilisations have little chance of success. “Ideally, the state would guide and protect the processes of demobilisation and resettlement. If the state is not able to protect such people, even minor disputes or conflicts can escalate into armed conflicts between groups” (Kingma, 2004a: 150; 2004b: 163). According to Kingma (2004a), the relative strength of both the state and democratic structures in South Africa made it easier to deal with some of the problems associated with demobilisation.

Second, the lack of economic opportunities and competition for natural resources may lead to renewed armed conflict following demobilisation. In Chapter 2, reference was
made to resource wars, which mean struggles to control or plunder resources, capturing sites rich in minerals, timber and other valuable commodities, or controlling points through which they pass on the way to markets (Renner, 2002). The absence of opportunities for ex-combatants to establish new livelihoods after demobilisation and the scarcity of formal sector jobs may serve as an incentive for soldiers to engage in resource-based armed conflict or to engage in criminal activities. Kingma (2004a) argues that large numbers of young people without job opportunities can be seen as a time-bomb that threatens the peace-building process in Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. This is because “the official termination of most armed conflicts in Africa has brought with it high expectations… Those with military skills and no stable livelihood can all too easily be mobilized for political purposes” (Kingma, 2004a: 152, 2004b: 164).

This links to the third factor, which is the availability of weapons. As discussed in Chapter 3, none of the demobilisation-reintegration processes in Southern Africa involved the effective disarmament of former soldiers. “Considerable numbers of weapons are also believed to have leaked from government forces during and after several demobilisations. Small arms are easy to smuggle across the long and porous borders of Africa, and easy access to these weapons increases the risk of people resorting to violence in case of disputes” (Kingma, 2004b: 165).

The fourth factor that determines whether the cessation of armed conflict is sustained relates to social and cultural differences that have developed between civilians and fighters during the war (Kingma, 2004a; 2004b). As the previous sub-section has shown, ex-combatants tend to identify themselves as such for a considerable period after they have been demobilised. The perception that they have not been sufficiently supported or rewarded often reinforces their “ex-combatants” identity. Linked to this is the psychological impact of armed conflict, especially the post-war trauma. As discussed in Chapter 7, a number of respondents reported that they had been victims or perpetrators of horrendous violence. Furthermore, this has left deep emotional and psychological scars among ex-combatants and others, and this was reflected in depression, apathy or rage. “Post-war trauma, especially in combination with alcohol or drug addiction, could disturb public life and affect the capacity for non-violent resolution of conflict” (Kingma, 2004b: 166). While the initial problems associated
with war trauma could be crime, suicide, and drug and alcohol abuse, these could affect the broader national peace-building processes in the longer term (Kingma, 2004a).

The appropriateness of reintegration assistance is the fifth factor that determines whether the cessation of armed conflict is sustained. Reintegration support has the potential to contribute to peace-building. It has indeed helped to buy time in different Southern African countries (Kingma, 2004a, 2004b). For example, in Chapter 3, it was stated that the Development Brigade in Namibia was never intended as a training programme, but instead that for a fixed period it served to remove and contain war veterans from the community. This was done through the payment of a small regular stipend of R50 a month (Preston, 1997). In Mozambique, reintegration was conceived to buy temporary stability for the election process. Reintegration projects did not mean reintegration into families and communities, but were designed to tie demobilised soldiers to a certain geographical area, all for electoral expediency which would allow the successful end of the UN deployment (Chachiua, undated). However, reintegration assistance can negatively affect peace-building and lead to tensions and conflict if there are perceived to be unjustified inequalities in the assistance that different groups receive (Kingma, 2004a; 2004b).

Lastly, regional aspects such as lack of effective disarmament and incomplete armed conflicts may determine whether the cessation of armed conflict is sustained.

While Kingma (2004a) argues that the relative strength of both the state and democratic structures in South Africa made it easier to deal with some of the problems associated with demobilisation, a permanent solution is still needed. Existing evidence indicates that the lack of economic opportunities in post-apartheid South Africa led some former APLA and MK combatants to get involved in high-profile criminal activities. Some scholars have argued that “if ex-combatants cannot find work there is a danger that they will fall back on what is often the only skill they have – the use of weapons – resulting in increased crime and possible insurrection” (Motumi and McKenzie, 1998: 181). While this is a plausible argument, it would be wrong to attribute the conduct of former soldiers in post-apartheid South Africa
exclusively to the absence of effective reintegration programmes. There is a need to explore a multiplicity of factors.

8.3.4 Ex-combatants’ Involvement in Criminal Activities

For several years following the end of armed conflict in South Africa, there have been media reports that numerous ex-combatants were involved in criminal activities. Two prominent examples are worth mentioning. First, the late Colin Chauke, a former MK combatant, was identified as the kingpin of a syndicate that engaged in cash-in-transit robberies. He eluded police for years, escaped from custody once arrested, and received substantial media attention until he was re-arrested, convicted and later died in prison. Second, as a result of a dispute over transport routes and transport prices between the Golden Arrow bus company and the mini-bus taxi associations in the Western Cape in 2000, Bandile Emmanuel Botya, a former MK cadre, was hired by taxi owners to shoot at Golden Arrow buses. He had agreed to payment of between R50 to R100 for each attack (Independent Online, 07.12.2000). After shooting dead a bus passenger and two bus drivers and wounding 36 passengers in six incidents in the Cape Peninsula townships, he was arrested and sentenced to three terms of life imprisonment on three counts of murder. In addition, he was sentenced to 75 years on 36 counts of attempted murder (South African Press Association, 12.12.2000). In July 2003, it was reported that “a group recognized as the ‘A-Team’ of South African robbers were arrested in Botswana while on a mission to steal more than R50 million. The notorious gang [had] been dubbed ‘The Government’ because of its military skills, high level network and ability to bribe powerful individuals” (Sunday World, 23.02.2003). The gang, which was connected to more than twenty cash-in-transit robberies, was linked to well-known former MK soldiers “Mafika and Muntu Shabangu who were trained in Zimbabwe. The two [were] reputed to be close confidantes of jailbird Collin Chauke” (Sunday World, 23.02.2003).

Criminal activities among former APLA and MK soldiers were not restricted to particular provinces. In Limpopo Province one respondent stated that he knew of at least six former MK soldiers who were involved in high-profile criminal activities, including cash-in-transit robberies. Meanwhile, another former MK soldier from Limpopo Province stated that one of Collin Chauke’s accomplices (a former MK

390
soldier) was from Mahwelereng, a township outside Mokopane (formerly Potgietersrus). According to the informant, the man was apprehended by the police while entering Mahwelereng driving a Toyota Venture loaded with cash from a cash-in-transit heist in which Collin Chauke was involved. This pointed to the existence of an extensive national crime syndicate consisting of ex-combatants. There has also been speculation in the media that former APLA members had been involved in violent attacks on white farmers; however, no substantial evidence has been presented to verify this speculation.

While some former APLA and MK members may be involved in criminal activities, it would be wrong to generalise about unemployed former soldiers being inclined to engage in criminal activities due to the absence of skills for jobs in the civilian sector, as is the case in Motumi and Mckenzie’s (1998) argument. This does not explain why some poor and destitute former soldiers were not engaged in criminal activities.

While it is wrong to criminalise ex-combatants, there are some factors that increase the potential for ex-combatants to engage in criminal activities, and all these are related to demobilisation. First, crime is often a response to immediate economic pressures in a post-conflict setting. As noted in Chapter 7, some former APLA and MK soldiers argued that targeted reintegration programmes in general and the provision of a Special Pension for former soldiers in particular would serve as a deterrent against crime by former soldiers. Noteworthy is the fact that some of the former combatants, who said they were against crime, stated that due to the absence of access to economic opportunities they were often tempted to use their guns to earn a living. The only factor that stopped them from taking such action was, they argued, because they had fought for democracy and thus committing crime would go against the ideals of a free, non-racial and democratic South Africa that they fought for.

However, others used the same argument and the lack of economic opportunities in a post-apartheid society to justify their involvement in crime. In Mpumalanga Province, a number of respondents in the survey of former APLA and MK soldiers noted that there were over 100 former APLA and MK soldiers in Barberton prison, detained for various criminal activities. According to respondents, these APLA and MK soldiers returned to a hostile economic environment in South Africa and, without any source
of income, they resorted to crime to earn a living. Some respondents complained that their military background was known by prospective employers in and around Nelspruit, and thus it was almost impossible for them to secure employment. As a consequence, crime became a viable alternative. In Polokwane (Limpopo Province), a frustrated former MK soldier who had been recently discharged by the SANDF in Lephalale (formerly Ellisras) complained about the lack of an income and threatened to use his gun to earn a living to support his family.

The discussion above shows that conditions push people to commit crime, and the military skills they possess facilitate the process. This is related to the second factor that increases the potential for ex-combatants to engage in crime. Ineffective disarmament meant that some former APLA and MK soldiers held on to their weapons, which increased their potential to engage in criminal activities. As stated in Chapter 4, the JMCC failed to deal effectively with the process of disarmament.

MK arms caches were only cleared by the new defence force early in 1994. This was because, in South Africa, as in the course of peace negotiations in other countries, weapons and equipment have been held back for a variety of individual and political purposes, including the desire for an insurance policy if peace negotiations failed, or to maintain a material base for future political bargaining (Cock, 1998b: 138).

While very few former APLA and MK soldiers admitted to gun ownership, anecdotal evidence pointed to the fact that many of them did own guns, mostly unlicensed. The common sentiment among former APLA and MK soldiers was that only those who were foolish handed in all their weapons. Furthermore, a number of former APLA and MK soldiers continuously threatened to resort to crime as a way of earning a living if their economic needs were not addressed. Ineffective disarmament during the negotiations ending conflicts in Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe also led to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region (Cock, 1998b).

The proliferation of light weapons is social, and thus requires a social solution (Cock, 1997b). “[T]he issue revolves around social relationships, values, practices and identities. The demand for light weapons is socially constructed; the supply is socially organized” (Cock 1997b: 87). Thus a demand-side analysis is the key to a social
solution to the spread of small arms and light weapons. This means moving beyond an analysis that focuses on the structural or root causes for the spread of small arms to investigating the material, ideological and cultural factors that contribute to the demand for small arms. Such information should be used to change the community’s perception of its identity and security. If this is successfully done, it may serve as a stepping stone towards reducing the demand for guns.

In South Africa light weapons carry general meanings, social practices and economic motivations among the various social categories (Cock, 1997b). Among the categories identified by Cock (1997b) are those for whom light weapons are a symbol of liberation, and denying them the right to these weapons is like denying them the right to their freedom. This category includes former APLA and MK soldiers who, after demobilisation, argued that the struggle for liberation was not yet over, hence they still held on to their guns. An attempt to control the proliferation of light weapons has to deal with these different cultural meanings, social practices and economic motivations (Cock, 1997b). However, it is important to note that the proliferation of small arms is partly the outcome of incomplete disarmament and demobilisation in post-conflict era. To make disarmament and demobilisation complete, it is necessary to integrate demobilised soldiers into the social and economic activities of the society, something that is absent in the region, including in South Africa. Without economic growth, light weapons will for a long time remain a form of currency for some people in the country, while for others they will remain a form of security against criminals.

However, attributing the possession of small arms and criminal activities by former soldiers to lack of economic opportunities cannot explain why some former combatants do not turn to crime despite their poor economic conditions. Human beings give meaning to their surrounding because the world around them has no intrinsic or inherent meaning. It is thus important to study the specific situation in which action takes place, the people involved and how they define the situation. Crime by former soldiers is not always a response to immediate economic pressures in a post-conflict setting. The cases of two former MK soldiers from the East Rand in Gauteng Province indicated that crime could be used as a tool towards a political goal. One of the respondents confessed that he was involved in criminal activities such as car hijackings, muggings and house breaking in his community. He reported that
while in exile he was identified as a spy, was tortured and detained by MK security, and later was “converted” to an MK cadre. On his arrival in South Africa, he joined the National Party and later the Democratic Party (DP) as a means to get back at the ANC. He stated that as a member of the DP he committed crimes to discredit the ANC. He further reported that he was working with the police in criminal activities.

Another former MK soldier from the same area argued that he was involved in criminal activities with the sole aim of discrediting the ANC, to create a perception that the ANC was not looking after the freedom fighters. He stated that he was working with white political organisations which helped crime syndicates to be strong in order to blame former MK soldiers and the ANC government for the increase in crime. As early as December 1997, Nelson Mandela, then president of the ANC, told delegates to the ANC’s fiftieth national conference that some people were using crime to discredit the ANC. In his presidential address, Nelson Mandela accused various elements of the former ruling group of being involved in a campaign that used crime to subvert the economy and erode the confidence of South Africans and the international community in the ability of the ANC to govern and fulfil its election pledge of reconstruction and development (Mandela, 1997).

Military downsizing and demobilisation provide a large pool of trained labour for the private security industry. However, it is not likely that the private security industry, however thriving it may be, will absorb more than a small proportion of this oversupply. Due to the general economic conditions in the region, few of the demobilised will be absorbed by the regular economy (Lock, 1999). Thus, apart from former combatants’ involvement in criminal activities, there is a danger that demobilised soldiers might become involved in illegal military activities. For some years now, there have been media reports of trans-national mercenary groups with South African origins or links. Although there has never been any evidence implicating former APLA and MK combatants in mercenary activities, the discussion is important because the potential for former soldiers to engage in different illegal military activities and various forms of social disruption is always present. This is because former combatants who come to feel redundant in peace time may engage in

58 The party was renamed the Democratic Alliance after forming an alliance with the National Party. The alliance did not last.
crime, as well as trigger unrest and renewed hostilities. Some South African private security firms employing former members of the SADF had developed into trans-national corporations with links to major oil and mining conglomerates.

One of the prominent mercenary groups was Executive Outcomes. According to Pech (1999), between 1989 and 1992, Executive Outcomes was a faithful agent of the former apartheid state and a privatised part of its “total onslaught” war machine. It was set up in 1989 as an intelligence training unit for SADF special forces. However, with the closure of the Civilian Co-operation Bureau (CCB) in 1990, it became a private security company. It was reported that Executive Outcomes, through its affiliates and front companies, had deployed personnel in different countries. For example, in Angola, Executive Outcomes employed former South African soldiers and was paid by the Angolan state oil company, Sonangol, to assist the Angolan army to regain control of the Soyo oilfields from UNITA rebels. It was estimated that Executive Outcomes was paid US$40 million per year for its services (Pech, 1999). The company was also involved in supporting the Sierra Leone Government in its attempts to defeat rebels (BBC NEWS World Edition, 11.03.2004).

In May 2001, Sowetan Sunday World reported that a group of about 100 jobless people were undergoing training as mercenary killers at an old mineshaft in Welkom in the Free State, allegedly with the express purpose of destabilising the South African government. The group, calling itself Bhava, was under the leadership of a former lieutenant in the Nigerian army and a military instructor from Namibia (Sunday World, 27.05.2001). The foreign leadership of this group pointed to the trans-national character of these mercenary groups. Intelligence reports indicated that “the recruits were lectured on the structure of a warship and taught how to steal a helicopter. They were also taught how to use a map to reach the Middle East, where the organization [was] alleged to be popular” (Sunday World, 27.05.2001). The soldiers were promised R800 per month, which was reduced to R300 after the sponsor withdrew.

On March 7, 2004, Zimbabwe officials seized a U.S.-registered cargo plane with 64 suspected mercenaries of various nationalities (including South Africans) and a cargo of "military material" (NewZimbabwe.Com, 08.03.04). Their Boeing 727 landed in Harare to pick up a consignment of weapons, including rifles, grenades, rocket-
launchers and mortars (*NewZimbabwe.Com, 20.08.2004*). The suspected mercenaries were accused of plotting to overthrow President Teodoro Obiang Nguema's 25-year-old regime in the small central African state of Equatorial Guinea. Charles Burrow, a senior executive of Logo Logistics Ltd, which had chartered the plane, admitted that almost all those on board the seized plane had military experience (*NewZimbabwe.Com, 09.03.2004*). In their defence, they argued that the weapons were needed to guard diamond mines in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where most of the men claimed they were going to do security work after being recruited in South Africa (*NewZimbabwe.Com, 09.03.2004*).\(^{59}\) *NewZimbabwe.com* reported that the training of the suspected mercenaries “was monitored by the [former] South African Defence Forces (SADF) under joint comms with the Zimbabwean Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO)” (*NewZimbabwe.Com, 09.03.2004*). The report went on to state that intelligence and army officials within the two countries knew about the operation.\(^{60}\)

The South African government enacted the *Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance* Act (No. 15 of 1998) to regulate the rendering of foreign military assistance by South African juristic persons, citizens, persons permanently resident within the Republic and foreign citizens rendering such assistance from within the borders of the Republic; and to provide for matters connected therewith. However, enforcing the law has been difficult. For example, a retired SADF combat pilot, Carl Alberts, the first mercenary prosecuted under the law, was fined less than US$3,000 for his offence, an amount equivalent to a day or two of pay. The only other man prosecuted, for military recruiting in Ivory Coast, was fined US$14,000 (*Chicago Tribune*, 18.03.2004). The arrest in Zimbabwe of the 64 suspected mercenaries was an indication that the *Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance* Act (1998) had failed to control mercenary activity. In 2004 it was reported that, despite legislation to curb mercenaries, South

\(^{59}\) In Zimbabwe, “*mining equipment*” is a euphemism for military hardware, as it was the same tactic used by President Mugabe's government to cloak its heavy involvement in the DRC armed conflict ([http://www.NewZimbabwe.Com/pages/plane7.1519.html](http://www.NewZimbabwe.Com/pages/plane7.1519.html), last accessed February 8 2005).

\(^{60}\) In an informal discussion around the radar system, a member of the South African Air Force informed the author (on condition of anonymity) that the SANDF and Military Intelligence knew about the plane carrying mercenaries. He further stated that the plane was monitored on the South Africa Air Force radar system until it left the South African skies, and that Zimbabwe officials were informed about the plane.
Africa remained one of the biggest providers of paid fighters on the international market, particularly for conflicts in Africa (Chicago Tribune, 18.03.2004).

At the time of the conclusion of the writing process of this study, the *Prohibition of Mercenary Activity and Prohibition and Regulation of Certain Activities in an Area of Armed Conflict Bill* [2005] had been cleared by Cabinet and was under consideration by the state law adviser. The aim of the new legislation was to close loopholes in the *Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act* (1998), which had failed to control mercenary activity. While this is desirable, the solution to the problem of mercenaries lies in the ending of armed conflicts, effective disarmament and the reintegration of former soldiers into civilian society with demilitarised social identities. Key to all these processes is economic development, accompanied by the eradication of wide economic inequality gaps within and between nations. Such a process cannot be achieved through individual government’s efforts but through the collective efforts of governments and regions. At the centre of all this is the adoption of a broadened concept of security which emphasises the security of the people.

While it is plausible to argue that the poor socio-economic conditions of former APLA and MK soldiers may lead to their involvement in criminal activities and other forms of social disruption, it is important to note that grievances in themselves do not lead to violent conflict. Percival and Homer-Dixon (1998) argue that people must perceive a relative decrease in their standard of living compared with other groups or compared with other aspirations, and they must see little chance of their aspirations being addressed under the status quo. Furthermore, two factors must be present for high levels of grievance to lead to widespread violence. These are; first groups with strong collective identities that can coherently challenge state authority, and second, clearly advantageous opportunities for violent collective action against authority. “The aggrieved must see themselves as members of groups that can act together, and they must believe that the best opportunities to successfully address their grievances involve violence” (Percival and Homer-Dixon, 1998: 280). If these conditions are present then grievances may produce civil strife, such as riots, rebellion and insurgency. The persistence of hierarchical social relations within MK (the largest former liberation army), and the fact that former MK soldiers seemed to be unable to operate outside the social relations they had with ANC and MK leadership during the
armed struggle, reduces the chances of serious social disruption in the short to medium term. However, the potential for former combatants to engage in criminal activities remains.

8.4 Conclusion

The transition from apartheid to democracy was the result not of a miracle or the seizure of power, but of a negotiated settlement that inevitably involved many explicit and implicit compromises (Cock, 2004). In the process of negotiating a transition to democracy in South Africa, there was recognition that a reconstituted armed force was essential for national reconciliation and to demonstrate a commitment to a new political order. The integration of seven armed forces to form a new national defence force (the SANDF) was an integral part of the transformation of the military. Due to the perceived and real improvement in the national and regional (military) security environment, and the perceived economic and development impact of the reduction of the defence expenditure, there was a provision for the reduction of size of the SANDF (rationalsation) after the completion of integration. The plan was to rationalise the SANDF to a total full-time force of 70,000 based on the Defence Review guidelines. In total 114,956 individuals integrated into the SANDF between 1994 and December 31, 2002. These were 6,421 former APLA soldiers, 14,791 former MK soldiers, 82,705 former SADF and 11,039 former TVBC forces (see Table 5.1).

The main rationalisation strategy was the Employer-Initiated Retrenchment (EIR). However, it was never implemented because of four reasons. First, not all former APLA and MK soldiers reported for integration. Second, due to the rate of natural attrition in the SANDF, it was unnecessary to implement the rationalisation strategy. Third, rationalisation was a serious political issue which had to be treated with some sensitivity. It was expected that rationalisation would largely affect black soldiers who made up the majority of members of the SANDF. Fearing tensions and accusations of discrimination, Cabinet rejected the idea of EIR. Lastly, with the recognition of military trade unions, Members of Parliament feared protracted labour disputes which might result from any announcement of the retrenchment of a large number of people from the Department of Defence. The reduction of the size of the SANDF took place
through voluntary severance packages and natural attrition. The former was open to all the members of the public service who wanted to leave following the integration of different public service systems. As a method of rationalisation, the VSP was ineffective first, because it was less attractive to people with few years of pensionable service. Second, the disadvantage of the VSP is that very often those who leave voluntarily are not necessarily the people the military would want to get rid of (Kingma, 2001).

The size of the SANDF was further reduced through different forms of natural attrition which included deaths, dismissals, resignations and contract expiry. The staffing system for the full-time uniform component of the SANDF consisted of three distinct parts – short-term service, medium-term service and long-term service. On expiry of the short- and medium-term contracts, based on behaviour or course progress or proven inability to adapt to the standards and expectations of military service, some of the contracts were not renewed. It was recognised that contract expiry would lessen force reductions. The Minister of Defence approved all non-renewals of short-term contracts. A board which included BMATT made recommendations to the Minister according to a set of criteria; most of the recommendations for not re-enlisting members related to adverse disciplinary records (Department of Defence, 1998b). According to Lamb (2004), through the voluntary severance package and natural attrition, the Department of Defence lost many highly skilled individuals. By November 2004, when the final integration report was submitted, only 56,192 soldiers from a total of 114,956 individuals who had integrated into the SANDF remained in the SANDF. These were 4,244 former APLA soldiers, 9,313 former MK soldiers, 37,233 former SADF soldiers, and 5,402 former TVBC soldiers (see Table 5.2).

Another process that contributed towards the reduction of the SANDF was the demobilisation of former APLA and MK soldiers. While the down-sizing of the military (rationalisation) was postponed until after the completion of integration, a decision was taken to demobilise the aged (some as old as 65), the sick (including the disabled) and those without the required educational qualifications. Through the process of demobilisation the Department of Defence got rid of 9,809 former APLA and MK soldiers who were constitutionally members of the SANDF but who had not
physically joined the SANDF (Department of Defence, 2004). However, the reduction of the size of the SANDF was more of an unintended consequence than the original objective of demobilisation. The main objective of demobilisation was to exclude former APLA and MK soldiers who could not or were unwilling to join the SANDF. The process was introduced without adequate planning and, as a consequence, an inadequate reintegration package was instituted. This consisted of a once-off demobilisation gratuity (depending on an individual’s length of service in either APLA or MK), a voluntary counselling programme for two weeks, and an option to join the Service Corps for an eighteen-month vocational training programme.

The reintegration programme failed to provide for the effective reintegration of former APLA and MK soldiers in the sense of achieving a productive livelihood. Furthermore, while respondents had achieved social reintegration, some of them continued to see themselves as a distinct group different from other members of society. The fact that many former APLA and MK soldiers continued to see themselves in this way was an indicator that “former combatant” was an active identity. However, for some, “former combatant” was a political identity, evident in the number of protest actions to highlight the plight of former APLA and MK combatants, as discussed in this chapter. Steven Corry warned that anger and frustration were building among former APLA and MK soldiers, and that they had the capacity to cause chaos if they organised under a charismatic leader (Interview with Steven Corry, Johannesburg, 19.06.2001). There is a lesson to learn from Zimbabwe in this regard. Writing about the Zimbabwean war veterans in 1997, Judith Todd observed that war veterans had plunged into the depths of poverty experienced by the majority of the Zimbabwean population and that they needed exactly the same kind of help as the rest of the population. The difference between "ex-combatants" and the rest of the population was that the former had wealthy and therefore mobile leaders such as the late Dr Hunzvi, who knew how to exploit their situation and terrorise the government (Judith Todd cited in The Zimbabwe Independent, 05.09.1997).

Due to the absence of effective reintegration programmes, there is a possibility that demobilised soldiers may threaten the consolidation of democracy in South Africa and destabilise the region. In the Southern African region, many ex-combatants have reported a sense of marginalisation and social dislocation. The incidence of banditry
means that they have become the targets for much contemporary social anxiety about gun violence. The proliferation of light weapons throughout the region following the end of armed conflicts and the lack of effective disarmament at the end of the armed conflict in South Africa makes the potential not only for violent crime but also for serious political and social disruptions, more probable. While the availability of such weapons is not a cause of armed conflicts and involvement in criminal activities, “the widespread abundance of such munitions has made it much easier for potential belligerents to initiate and sustain armed combat” (Boutwell, and Klare, 1999a: 217; Klare, 1999: 14).

The sustainability of peace in Southern Africa depends on how governments deal with the legacy of 30 years of war and militarisation in the region. The most important requirement for the sustainability of peace is the existence of strong democratic political institutions. This should be accompanied by the successful disarmament and effective reintegration of demobilised soldiers into civilian society, an effective regional weapons control policy, as well as effective national weapons control policies to deal with weapons circulating among members of the civilian population. The consolidation and sustainability of peace also depends on the development of a collaborative security community in the region, built on common democratic values and institutions, an observance of human rights, strengthening the rule of law, and policies that are informed by a concern for individual as opposed to state security. A strong regional mass-based demilitarisation movement to challenge the power of the defence establishment is central to the process. However, all these are impossible if there are no sound economic development programmes and equitable distribution of resources within countries. Given South Africa’s dominant role through its destabilisation programme during apartheid, it will be expected to play a leading role in socio-economic development as well as peace-building in the region. South Africa cannot afford to ignore this role because its destiny, security and prosperity are inextricably linked to those of its neighbours.