

Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

607 South Mathews Street Urbana IL 61801 217/333-7086

Occasional Paper

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Paul F. Diehl

Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and
International Security and
Department of Political Science

and

Sonia R. Jurado

Department of Political Science

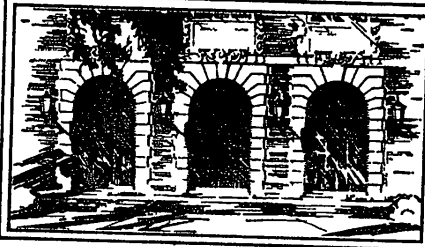
February, 1992

Paul F. Diehl is associate professor of political science and a faculty member in the Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is co-author of *Territorial Changes and International Conflict* (1991) and editor of *Measuring the Correlates of War* (1990) *The Politics of International Organizations* (1989) and *Through the Straits of Armageddon* (1987) as well as the author of over thirty articles on peace and security affairs

Sonia R. Jurado is a Junior majoring in Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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United Nations Election Supervision in South Africa? Lessons from the Namibian Peacekeeping Experience¹

Paul F Diehl and Sonia R Jurado

They (South Africa) used Namibia as a dress rehearsal for what s happening in South Africa ²

Introduction

As the Cold War concludes and long standing regional conflicts dissipate there are also signs of change in South Africa. The release of Nelson Mandela from prison, the relaxation of apartheid laws, and proposals for elections from the de Klerk government signal the beginning of a process by which majority rule will be established in South Africa. Although one can clearly see the endpoint of the process (although not exactly fix its time) it is less clear whether the transition will be peaceful or marred by violence. Most likely democratic elections will be the key event that establishes majority rule. In our view, it is also likely that the United Nations will be called upon to supervise those elections, much as they did when Namibia gained its independence from South Africa. In this essay, we explore the Namibian peacekeeping experience of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) with an eye to understanding how the triumphs and failures of that operation could reoccur in South Africa.

There are several implications of this analysis. First, unless the peacekeeping strategy is applied properly in South Africa, the goals that the process was designed to achieve may not be met. This means that a bungled operation may prevent South Africa from having truly democratic elections, and widespread violence could be a regrettable consequence. The chances for the long term stability of the southern African continent may be jeopardized.

Second, the lessons drawn from the Namibian experience apply not only to South Africa, but also to other applications of U.N. election supervision as well. In the new world order, the United Nations will be called upon to act as a neutral arbiter in several internal conflicts.³ There are already, at this writing, plans for U.N. supervision of elections in Cambodia and the Western Sahara. The potential pitfalls we note for the use of peacekeeping troops for election supervision in South Africa are similar to those that would be encountered in those two areas and elsewhere. Finally, we offer some suggestions on how traditional United Nations peacekeeping operations must be modified to meet the new responsibilities occasioned by election supervision.

We begin discussing why U.N. supervision of South African elections is highly probable. We then specify the tasks likely to be performed by U.N. peacekeeping troops, relying in part on the precedent of the Namibian operation. We then assess the major problems encountered by the Namibian operation and how these might be relevant for the South African case (and by implication to other instances of U.N. election supervision). Finally, we offer some guidelines on how a South African peacekeeping operation might be improved to meet those challenges.

1 Support for this research was provided by the Summer Research Opportunities Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The authors would like to thank Edward Kolodziej and Stephen Cohen for their comments and suggestions.

2 This was a quote by a South African agent, Nico Basson, operating in Namibia. See "Ex Soldier for Pretoria Describes Namibia Plot," *New York Times*, 1 July 1991, p. 4.

3 Paul Diehl and Chetan Kumar, "Mutual Benefits from International Intervention: New Roles for United Nations Peace Keeping Forces," *Bulletin of Peace Proposals* 22, 4 (1991): 369-375.

Peacekeeping in South Africa⁷

Although there is as yet no formal transition agreement⁴ providing for the monitoring of initial free elections in South Africa there are several reasons to believe that one is not far away and more importantly for the purposes here that the United Nations is likely to be charged with election supervision. First, the parties to such an agreement will not rely merely on the good faith of the other signatories. The de Klerk government will surely not want the African National Congress (ANC) to monitor balloting in black homelands. Similarly black groupings will find unacceptable the idea that the extant South African government be responsible for ensuring the fairness of the election. Indeed the ANC has noted in the 1989 Harare Declaration that the role of the international community in the transition process will be a subject for negotiation with the de Klerk government.⁵ The mistrust is also prevalent within racial groups: various black and white factions respectively in some cases are as hostile to one another as they are to different racial groups. It seems conceivable that a transition agreement would include some provision for external supervision of those elections.

Second if external monitoring of the election is to occur it is implausible that a regional organization would perform the task. The logical grouping to handle the job would be the Organization of African Unity (OAU). There are few other suitable organizations on the African continent. The OAU experienced a miserable failure in its only attempt at peacekeeping in Chad more than a decade ago. The OAU has neither the experience, finances, administrative machinery, or perhaps even the willingness to perform another peacekeeping operation. Even if supplemental assistance were provided by the United Nations or the European Community for example it is unlikely that the white South African government would allow the OAU to implement a peace accord: an organization of primarily black African states with a history of animosity toward the white government is hardly the ideal neutral party in the eyes of the de Klerk government.

Third while it is conceivable that some multilateral arrangement led perhaps by the United States or Britain could supervise the elections it is more likely that those two states and most of the internal parties in South Africa will insist that the United Nations be the implementing agency. No other grouping has had any experience in the kind of election supervision necessary. Furthermore the Namibian precedent means that there will be increased international pressure for the United Nations to be involved in the transition process. Even the de Klerk government may overtly favor U.N. supervision as it will know what to expect based on what happened in Namibia. One might anticipate then that the ultimate agreement between the de Klerk government and the black factions will include a provision for U.N. supervision for elections much as Resolution 435 outlined the basic terms of agreement in Namibia.⁶

Peacekeeping Duties in Election Supervision

Traditional peacekeeping operations have a very limited set of duties. First and foremost, peacekeeping troops are charged with monitoring cease fire arrangements and deterring violations by acting as an interposition force separating the combatants.⁷ This is normally achieved not through force of arms (peacekeeping troops are only lightly armed and can use military force only in self-defense) but through moral suasion and physical separation. Peacekeeping troops are also often charged with supervising the withdrawal of forces and weapons from designated areas. Reports of violations or questions of compliance are usually handled by some conciliation mechanism with the disputing parties and the United Nations participating.

4 For an analysis of how a democratic government in South Africa might be designed, see Donald Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa: Engineering in a Divided Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) and F. van Zyl-Salbert and David Welsh, *South Africa's Options: Strategies for Sharing Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979).

5 African National Congress, *Harare Declaration*, 21 October 1989.

6 Security Council Resolution 435, 29 September 1978.

7 For a review of all peacekeeping operations see Alan James, *Peacekeeping in International Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

Supervising elections represents a deviation from normal peacekeeping procedures. Peacekeepers will be assigned duties that are dramatically different from the passive observation roles that have characterized prior operations. Furthermore, peacekeeping forces will not be operating along an identifiable border separating combatants but throughout a country in which not even the color of a person's skin will necessarily reveal their political loyalty. Based on the Namibian precedent⁸ and the peculiarities of the South African situation and ignoring speculation about what specific provisions of a peace agreement might dictate, the following is a list of likely duties for a U.N. election supervision force.

1 *Cease Fire Monitoring*—This function is similar to the duties of traditional peacekeeping in that the peacekeeping force would be responsible for reporting any acts of violence by political groups during the election campaign. Unlike traditional forces, however, peacekeepers in South Africa will be stationed throughout the country rather than at a few fixed points along an international border.

2 *Disengagement of Military Forces*—The peacekeeping force would likely monitor the withdrawal of the South African Defense Forces (SADF) from around the country. U.N. troops might also monitor agreements that confine the army and any paramilitary groups to their barracks until after the election so that they may not be used to intimidate voters. A similar provision was included in the Namibian agreement.

3 *Law and Order*—The peacekeeping force will be in charge of supervising the law and order system until it is turned over to the new government. This probably means ensuring that South African police perform their legal functions and do not violate the civil rights of the citizenry or attempt to influence the election campaign (for example, by beating or arresting supporters of the ANC). The peacekeeping force will also be concerned with limiting the violence precipitated by private groups, such as white radicals.

4 *Verification of Repeal of Discriminatory Practices and Release of Political Prisoners and Detainees*—The peacekeeping force would be in charge of ensuring that the remaining social and political restrictions based on apartheid were eliminated and the new rules guaranteeing equality were observed. The forces would also inspect prisons and other locations to ensure that all political prisoners or those detained without proper authority of law were released.

5 *Return of Refugees*—The peacekeeping force would also ensure that those who fled the country for political purposes be allowed to return and take part in the election. The repatriation program would likely be coordinated with other U.N. agencies such as the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

6 *Establishment of Election Procedures*—Before an election can occur, millions of those previously disenfranchised must be registered to vote. U.N. peacekeeping forces must monitor the process to insure that those eligible to vote are granted that right and those not eligible are excluded; the critical duty is to guarantee that these decisions are made in a nonpartisan fashion. For example, in Namibia, there was a provision that no registration application could be rejected without the approval of a UNTAG official.

7 *Election Supervision*—Finally, after all the preparatory work, the peacekeeping force would be stationed at polling places on election day in order to monitor the fairness of the election. U.N. forces would be witness to any irregularities and their presence would serve to deter election day violence. If the election went smoothly, the peacekeeping force could certify the fairness of the process. Its task completed, U.N. troops would withdraw after the new government was firmly established and a decent interval of time had passed.

⁸ Details on the Namibia peace agreement and the role of the United Nations can be found in Robert Jaster, "The 1988 Peace Accords and Future of South Western Africa," *Adelphi Paper* 253, London: Brassey's, 1990; Chester Crocker, "Southern African Peace Making," *Survival* 32:3 (1990): 221-232; and United Nations, *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peacekeeping*, second edition, New York: United Nations, 1990.

In performing these duties the peacekeeping force will be concerned with a variety of groups that may cause difficulties. Most prominently is the white South African government. It may seem odd that the government elites would cause difficulties when they are relinquishing power voluntarily and are presumed to support the election process. Nevertheless, this only suggests that the government will not work to destroy the election process, not that they won't try and manipulate the outcome (much as the South African government did in Namibia). One might guess that the peace agreement will guarantee some sort of white representation in the new government, but whites may still seek to fragment black support and deny the ANC a working majority. Thus, the peacekeeping force will have to be concerned with actions by the de Klerk government that threaten the fairness of the election, although it is unlikely the government will take any steps to try and undermine the whole peace process. The ANC and other black groups will similarly have some incentive to manipulate the election outcome, although their need, and especially their means, to do so is considerably less.

A more serious concern to the peacekeeping force might be those groups who oppose the peace agreement and whose purpose is not merely to affect the election outcome, but to prevent the election from ever taking place. These groups could include white radicals who oppose the end of apartheid and majority rule as well as black groups that might be excluded (by choice or design) from the peace agreement. It is from these groups that the greatest threat of widespread violence emanates. Thus, the peacekeeping force must deal with groups that want to maximize political advantage in the election process as well as perhaps those that want to destroy the process.

Lessons from the Namibian Experience

By most standards, the UNTAG operation was a success in that Namibia made the transition to independent state and the elections there were free and fair by most accounts. Nevertheless, the operation did experience several difficulties, not the least of which were serious violent incidents. The UN peacekeeping experience in Namibia can provide several lessons for what is likely to be a very similar operation in South Africa. First, UNTAG was the first peacekeeping operation devoted to election supervision and the only one completed as of this writing.⁹ Thus, to a large extent, precedent will dictate that future efforts at election supervision will draw heavily on the procedures and ideas derived from the Namibian experience. Second, a peacekeeping operation in South Africa would take place in the same region, involve many of the same actors as in Namibia, and the key issue of majority rule is at the centerpiece. Of course, Namibia was a case of national independence rather than a regime change, but the parallels relating to geography, politics, and self-determination are strong. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the key actors in South Africa regarded the Namibian experience as a trial run for what will happen in their own country. To that extent, the lessons that can be taken from the UNTAG experience will directly condition the behavior of the interested parties. Thus, there are a set of lessons to be taken from the UNTAG operation that must be learned in order to avoid the problems of that operation and to facilitate peaceful regime change in South Africa.

Size of Peacekeeping Forces

Traditional peacekeeping forces number anywhere from a few hundred to over ten thousand. Yet, those troops may be in largely stationary positions in a narrow geographic area (often at a border between two states), interested only in the movements of defined military units. In election supervision, the concerns of the peacekeeping force are expanded to include the whole population and, formally, all prospective polling sites. The peacekeeping forces are responsible for stabilizing a whole country and the dividing lines between opposition groups and individuals are less clear. In addition, the peacekeeping force assumes many duties (e.g., police and refugee assistance) that are foreign to traditional operations. Given such responsibilities, a normal sized peacekeeping force would seem to be inadequate.

⁹ The United Nations and others have sent observation teams to monitor elections. Yet, these differ significantly from peacekeeping forces. Observation teams are smaller, unarmed, deployed just prior to the election, and have no direct role in limiting armed conflict in the area of deployment.

Despite the increased requirements of the force UNTAG was considerably smaller than the 25 000 or more than was thought to be needed. Original plans included only 7,500 soldiers and some election personnel. Yet the Security Council imposed a limit on expenditures that necessitated that the force be reduced to 4 000.¹⁰ The small force proved inadequate to supervise the election process in Namibia. Namibia has a population of 1.5 million people throughout a vast territory the size of the United Kingdom and France combined.

Problems in Namibia from the small size affected most of the functions that the peacekeeping force was supposed to perform. The peace agreement specified that the (SADF) and the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) guerrillas would be confined to their bases with weapons being turned over to UNTAG. Yet the peacekeeping forces had to move from place to place and did not have the manpower to monitor the disengagement effectively. Into these open pockets there were reports that the SADF continued to operate and that they supplied arms to opposition groups.¹¹ Similarly not all political prisoners were released as specified in the peace agreement. It was possible to move such prisoners around to various locations in the country staying several steps ahead of UNTAG and therefore avoiding detection. Had the peacekeeping force been larger and therefore better able to supervise a bigger area at one time these violations might have been prevented.

Peacekeeping operations of all varieties experience problems when they are geographically deployed so as to prevent them from fully observing the activities of the protagonists.¹² In Namibia the small number of troops deployed over a large area could not deter a number of violent clashes between South African and SWAPO forces especially in the first weeks of the operation. Furthermore the inability to detect South African violations assisted that country in its attempt to manipulate the outcome of the election and it also undermined support for the operation by the parties involved.

U.N. peacekeeping forces cannot afford to organize forces in South Africa as they have done previously in Namibia and elsewhere. South Africa is 140 000 square miles larger than Namibia with several more international borders to monitor (so that irregular forces or illegal voters cannot infiltrate the country). Furthermore the South African population is nearly 40 million more than twenty five times the size of Namibia, this will necessitate a greater number of polling places and therefore more positions that require monitoring on election day. The tasks of voter registration and keeping order are also magnified.

There are several approaches to addressing the problems attendant to force size. The most obvious is to obtain approval from U.N. members to supply the necessary number of troops (which could exceed 50 000 or 100 000) at the time that the operation is authorized. This is a very expensive proposition and there may be some reluctance by the permanent Security Council members in particular to bear this burden. Yet some cost saving measures as reducing the force size will prove penny wise and pound foolish in the long run if widespread violence results. Thus a peacekeeping operation in South Africa must plan for the largest force size that is politically and financially possible.

There are several options that could mitigate the problems of force size should financial or political impediments dictate an inadequate force. First the peacekeeping force could shift reliance from the basic foot soldier in a jeep to aerial surveillance remote sensors and helicopters. This would allow the peacekeeping force to cover a greater area with limited manpower. Of course this idea depends on the willingness of U.N. members to contribute such forces. Furthermore such high technology alternatives are inappropriate to several of the peacekeeping tasks such as election registration and supervision.

A second option is to call in a special force just prior to election day in order to monitor the voting. Election day will be the time that the force will have to be at maximum strength. A temporary increase in the size of the peacekeeping force might achieve the desired manpower but without the long term cost. Such a force composed of military units of U.N. members may be necessary anyway. The United Nations is unlikely

10 Security Council Votes to Cut Namibia Force *New York Times* 17 January 1989 p 4

11 Namibia Rebels Say Pretoria is Rigging November Elections *New York Times* 11 August 1989 p 6. See also Pretoria Spent \$35 Million to Influence Namibian Vote *New York Times* 26 July 1991 p A3

12 Paul Diehl Peacekeeping Operations and the Quest for Peace *Political Science Quarterly* 103 3 (1988) 485 507

to find 50 000 or 100 000 trained peacekeepers for duty especially with the continuation and expansion of peacekeeping forces elsewhere Yet one should be hesitant to deploy military forces that have no training or experience in peacekeeping philosophy strategy and tactics Allowing them to join the force for one day with a specified duty should minimize the chances for a violent incident and yet contribute greatly to the overall mission (with a slight cost in organizational coordination)

In summary a peacekeeping force in South Africa must be adequately staffed to meet the new requirements of election supervision Judging from the Namibian experience if the United Nations attempts to get by with a force of a similar size to UNTAG violence and claims of election manipulation that threaten to unravel the whole process are real risks

Composition and Neutrality of the Force

An essential part of U N peacekeeping strategy is that the troops involved be neutral ¹³ In practice this means that the troops be drawn from states that do not have an active interest in the conflict at hand and pursue a nonaligned foreign policy not surprisingly then the Nordic countries have been regular contributors to U.N peacekeeping operations The forces are also directed not to act in a manner that favors the interests of any disputant As an international agency the United Nations is also viewed by the participants as being neutral in that the organization has no specific interest in the operation other than promoting international peace and security The neutrality of the force is also strongly related to the relative success it has in limiting armed conflict ¹⁴

At first glance it would appear that UNTAG's composition fulfilled the basic requirements for neutrality by virtue of its composition the operation included contributions from a cross section of fifty states mostly from outside of Africa Nevertheless there was some controversy over the composition and the force's neutrality Some in Namibia objected that certain states that contributed troops did not themselves have free elections this undermined some of the trust that the United Nations had built among the population More importantly South Africa did not regard the United Nations as a completely impartial institution in administering the election In large part, this was because of the long and bitter relationship that South Africa and the United Nations had over Namibia. The United Nations has long denunciations of the policy of apartheid it is not surprising that the United Nations was viewed suspiciously by the white government. Perhaps most suggestive of a bias the United Nations had recognized one of the parties in the election SWAPO as the authentic representative of the Namibian people ¹⁵ Other political parties had some reason therefore to doubt that the United Nations had no preference in the outcome of the election

In order for any peacekeeping operation to function effectively it must have the support and trust of the participants In Namibia, South Africa virtually regarded the UNTAG troops as agents or symbols of SWAPO Not surprisingly South Africa took a number of steps (covertly funding some political parties clashing with SWAPO forces and working to undermine the integrity of the election etc) in part to offset the perceived bias of the U.N troops There were even plans although never carried out, to attack U N positions as part of the strategy of intimidation and election manipulation ¹⁶

When the forum moves to South Africa, it is clear that the neutrality of the United Nations could continue to be an issue Since 1945 the United Nations has repeatedly condemned South Africa's policy of apartheid. In addition the organization suspended the membership privileges of the country while granting observer status to the African National Congress

How might the United Nations avoid the perception of bias that caused some difficulties in Namibia? While no solution that wipes away fifty years of hostility and mistrust is readily available there are ways to lessen

13 Richard Nelson, *Multinational Peacekeeping in the Middle East and the United Nations Model* *International Affairs* 61 1 (1984) 67 89 and Brian Urquhart, *Beyond the Sheriff's Posse* *Survival* 32 2 (1990) 196 205

14 Nelson, *Multinational Peacekeeping* and Diehl *Peacekeeping Operations*

15 United Nations *Namibia A Unique U.N Responsibility* New York United Nations 1981

16 *New York Times* 1 July 1991

fears of U.N. bias particularly those of white South Africans. Traditionally neutral troops have been secured by composing the units of soldiers from nonaligned and disinterested states. In this instance contributions from many Third World states would be obnoxious to white South Africans. One solution is to permit the composition of the U.N. peacekeeping force to be a subject of negotiation between the indigenous actors. This would allow any party to veto the participation of soldiers who might be viewed as hostile to its interests.

A second and related solution is for the United Nations to structure the force so as to include disproportionate contributions from states that do not normally supply peacekeeping forces. In this case the United States and Great Britain, who have maintained relatively cordial relationships with South Africa over the past few decades, might be called upon to organize the bulk of the troops and perhaps play a prominent role in the administration of the operation. One could also envision excluding contributions from any front line states or perhaps any OAU member, although the latter may lessen the legitimacy of the peacekeeping force in the eyes of black South Africans. By making these adjustments in force composition there may be less suspicion as to the motives of the troops and fewer disagreements and violence over perceived or real biased actions.

A third solution, and one not exclusive of the other two, is to have adequate mechanisms in place for dealing with disputes that arise during the course of the operation. This mechanism could not only deal with questions of neutrality but all varieties of problems that arise during the course of the operation. The need for such a mechanism is discussed in detail in the next section.

The Need for a Dispute Resolution Forum

The conclusion of a peace agreement does not mean the end of conflict between the participants. The economic and political stakes of the election outcome strongly suggest that there will be disagreements and claims about whether some parties are abiding by the letter and spirit of the agreement. Traditional peacekeeping forces must also deal with such disputes; this is achieved by informal and formal meetings with the participants to investigate complaints and work out differences. Yet, traditional operations occupy smaller areas with fewer duties and accordingly the opportunity for disagreement is less. Election supervision involves monitoring activities without any defined lines separating the disputing parties; indeed there is a great deal of interaction between all sides. The complexity of the process also portends disputes over troop movements, voter registration, and voter intimidation.

The need for a mechanism to resolve any disputes peacefully was not fully recognized in the Namibian agreement. Among the civilian components of UNTAG was an independent jurist designed to advise on any dispute related to the release of political prisoners and detainees.¹⁷ Yet this covered only one aspect of the peace agreement. The lack of a formal mechanism for other disputes arising from the implementation of the agreement became evident at the outset of the operation.

In March 1989 the SADF claimed that SWAPO guerrillas crossed the Angolan border in violation of Resolution 435. South Africa desired to conduct retaliation raids against SWAPO forces. The peacekeeping force initially lacked any way of confirming this claim (although later proven to be correct)¹⁸ and there was no forum for discussion and facilitating a de-escalation of the crisis without violence. After threatening to pull out of the agreement, South African troops then attacked SWAPO forces in the bloodiest clashes of the pre-election period. Only after these incidents did the United Nations draw the joint commission of states together to stabilize the situation and get the peace process back on track.

The attacks at the outset of the peacekeeping operation did not represent the last disputes that arose. It quickly became clear that South Africa was attempting to manipulate the outcome of the election through various covert activities; their goal was to deny a two-thirds majority to SWAPO and thereby its ability to write a constitution unencumbered by the preferences of other parties more sympathetic to South African interests. SWAPO continually appealed to the United Nations, threatening not to recognize the results of the election to

¹⁷ United Nations Blue Helmets

¹⁸ Carnage as PM Visits Namibia *Sunday Telegraph* (London) 2 April 1989 p 1

restrain the SADF from undertaking activities such as intimidating voters and covertly aiding the opposition. Without an investigative arm to determine the validity of the claims and a mechanism (other than diplomatic protests to the South African government) there was little the peacekeeping forces could do.

One might easily presume that the disputes and resulting violence that characterized the Namibian operation could be repeated in South Africa. As noted above, there is an inherent distrust among the various actors in South Africa. Furthermore, the chances for conflict and disagreement would seem to be high given the greater number and diversity of political groups. The de Klerk government might also use its resources in order to bolster the vote of groups such as Inkatha Freedom Party and to minimize the support of the ANC. For the white government facing the loss of their own power in their own country, the stakes are considerably higher than in Namibia. There have already been confirmed reports of the government channelling aid to Inkatha and less certain claims that the South African police have ignored black-on black violence when the perpetrators have been Inkatha and the victims members of the ANC.

Before the United Nations repeats its mistakes in Namibia, the peacekeeping force must be accompanied by an explicit dispute resolution forum. This will include representatives of the various political groups in South Africa and U.N. officials. Yet there needs to be supplemental bodies in order to ensure that the dispute resolution forum operates properly. First, there must be an independent investigation team to look into any allegations of wrongdoing with respect to any aspect of the agreement. Second, this effort could be supplemented by U.N. officials corresponding to each of the tasks, acting as liaisons to the dispute resolution forum. Finally, it may be necessary, contrary to traditional peacekeeping practice, to authorize some limited enforcement powers to the peacekeeping force in order to ensure that the peace agreement is kept (this authorization will be far less than is necessary in any kind of collective security action).

Of course, the creation of dispute resolution mechanisms will not head off all disagreements or acts of violence. They will deter some hostile actions by the parties, however, as the likelihood of detection and embarrassment will be increased. In addition, some disputes may be resolved short of the use of military force by any actor. In these ways, the peacekeeping operation can help minimize the loss of life as well as the occurrence of actions that may undermine the whole peace process.

Limiting the Power of the Government in the Transition Period

Traditional peacekeeping operations freeze the status quo in terms of political power and are not concerned with government functions, except as they affect the maintenance of a cease fire. When peacekeeping troops are assigned election supervision duties, their scope of concern is broadened considerably. In particular, the issue of what forces will maintain normal governmental functions such as law and order, voter registration, and the like are critical.

The simplest solution is to leave these functions in the hands of the extant government until a new government can take its place and reorganize those duties as it desires. Yet this solution, while convenient and efficient on the one hand, leaves enormous power in the hands of a particular political group that is a competitor in those elections. The obvious risk is that the current government will use its control over the bureaucratic machinery in order to manipulate the outcome of the election. Most obviously, it could achieve that goal through its activities in conducting the election and maintaining law and order. In the election process, the government is in charge of registering voters, selecting polling sites, and managing the election. In maintaining law and order, the police may be one of the few institutions to remain armed during the election process and have sweeping powers to arrest and detain alleged criminals. Abuses of these responsibilities can help achieve political aims. Such manipulation was evident in Namibia.

The number of UNTAG personnel was insufficient to operate as a police force and, indeed, according to Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, this was not their purpose anyway.¹⁹ Thus, the South West Africa Police, effectively controlled by South Africa, retained primary responsibility for law and order. Fifteen hundred civilian personnel from UNTAG were to monitor the activities of the police force, by riding in patrols with the police.

19 Namibia's Independence Process *Transafrica Forum*, 22 (1990) p 68

officers for example. Yet successful monitoring of the police required their cooperation which was not always forthcoming especially in the early stages of the operation. Disarming the SADF and confining them to their bases had little effect as a well armed police force could achieve the same degree of intimidation. There were numerous complaints about police behavior but the peacekeeping force had little ability to investigate or take action on those complaints. Second the paramilitary group Koevoet, rather than being disbanded was integrated into the police force. This enhanced the influence of the South African government and increased its ability to intimidate potential SWAPO voters. Koevoet personnel became as much a major cause of the law and order problem with their activities as they contributed to peace and stability as members of the police force.²⁰

The South African government also had an inordinate amount of power in the election process. Although some safeguards were in place there were some reports of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) members from Angola being recruited and given Namibian citizenship if they promised to vote against SWAPO.²¹ There were fewer problems on election day with several hundred voting sites monitored by UNTAG personnel. Voter turnout was very high and U.N. officials were satisfied that no serious election day irregularities occurred.

The problem of maintaining government functions and still ensuring a fair election will be revisited in South Africa. The de Klerk government presumably cannot be trusted to administer the elections impartially given their vital stake in the outcome and past history of funneling assistance to Inkatha and other groups opposed to the ANC. Neither can the government be said to run internal security with an even hand considering their willingness for example to allow Inkatha members to carry "ceremonial" weapons that have been linked to attacks on ANC members. Furthermore there is some question whether the de Klerk government even has full control over the police force.²² Again there will be ample opportunity for white groups to manipulate the registration process and intimidate voters through use (or lack of use in some cases) of the local police who do the bidding of Pretoria or radical white political groups.

Although it is impossible to mitigate the political advantages of the incumbent government in any circumstance (they will likely still control or manipulate the media for example) there are some steps that a peacekeeping force in South Africa could take. First the peacekeeping force could assume a greater role in law enforcement than they did in Namibia. It is probably unrealistic to expect that the United Nations could (or would desire to) assume all the police functions. Yet they must play more of a role than passive observers. One middle option is to integrate U.N. forces with the South African police at all levels with joint administration at the highest levels. This permits greater control over the actions of the police as well as some mechanism to investigate abuses and take appropriate action in response.

Second U.N. peacekeeping personnel might take over the bulk of the duties for registering voters and administering the election. This may appear to be a violation of sovereignty but prior arrangements which left power in the hands of the South African government proved inadequate. With these steps the peacekeeping force can deter white South African attempts (as well as those of other political groups) to manipulate the election. The chances of getting caught and causing a scandal will increase. These steps will also lessen the opportunity for manipulation by removing some control over the process from those likely to misuse the power.

Cooperation of Subnational Groups

Among the most important ingredients in the success of traditional peacekeeping operations is the cooperation of the primary parties and other interested actors in the conflict.²³ The absence of that cooperation undermined the U.N. peacekeeping operation in Lebanon (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon—UNIFIL) as Syria and

20 United Nations Blue Helmets

21 Tore Linne Eriksen, Namibia: South African Withdrawal and Preparations for Destabilization *Bulletin of Peace Proposals* 20 (1989) 295-307

22 Steven Mufsen, South Africa 1990 *Foreign Affairs* 70 1 (1991) 120-141

23 Diehl, *Peacekeeping Operations*

Israel supported various Lebanese factions in opposition to the peacekeeping mandate of limiting violence in the area. Similarly the Multinational Force (MNF) in Beirut had great problems despite the support of the host government of Lebanon. Various factional militias actively opposed the operation and the civil war in that country continued largely unabated. Unless the primary parties and all those with a strong stake in the outcome of the peacekeeping process cooperate then patterns of violence are likely to reemerge. The whole peace process can be undermined if one group starts a cycle of violence by violating the cease-fire.

Although linking the Cuban withdrawal from Angola to progress in Namibian independence had its drawbacks it did have the advantage of securing the cooperation of Cuba and Angola in the Namibian peace plan. Their input not only diminished the likelihood of conflict in Namibia during the elections but in the region as a whole. Thus a positive lesson from the Namibian experience is the need to secure the support of interested third party states. Of course the support of South Africa was the cornerstone for the operation and many of the problems encountered could be attributed to less than full cooperation by the Pretoria government.

Where the Namibian accord was also less than fully successful was in garnering the support of all the important indigenous groups. Fortunately it was in the interest of most of those groups to back a free election supervised by the United Nations. Nevertheless SWAPO either misinterpreted the peace accord or deliberately sought to circumvent parts of it when their forces crossed the Angolan border setting off fierce fighting at the outset of the pre-election phase.²⁴ Perhaps if SWAPO had been a direct signatory to the accords these problems could have been settled by negotiation.²⁵ Other groups such as the aforementioned Koevoet, were not formally part of the accord and worked against many of its precepts.

Legally only the South African government would need to agree to an election plan before U.N. peacekeeping troops would be authorized to supervise any elections. Practically a successful transition will require much broader support. U.N. sponsored elections in South Africa will probably engender great support among African countries and especially the front line states. Thus many of the external actors most likely to scuttle a peacekeeping operation will provide strong backing to the mission.

Nevertheless various subnational groups may have reason to sabotage the mission or at least not cooperate in all its facets. Just as important as government cooperation is that of the numerous and diverse political groups in South Africa. On the extreme right, white supremacist groups (such as Blanke Veiligheid or "White Safety" and the Afrikaner Resistance Movement) have every reason to oppose any plan that will transfer South Africa to majority rule. Such groups have already been involved in a number of violent actions against blacks. There is a tendency in the West to assume that the ANC represents the interests and views of all or most blacks in South Africa, this perspective ignores the various political and cultural cleavages among the predominant racial group in the country. The Pan Africanist Congress and the Solidarity Party are just two examples of other relevant actors in the political mainstream of the opposition to white rule.

With the diversity of interests and political perspectives in South Africa how might the United Nations minimize violent acts in opposition to the elections and peacekeeping supervision? The first step is to ensure that the peacekeeping force has more than the support of the de Klerk government. If the peacekeeping force is viewed as a tool of the regime then it will lack the legitimacy and credibility it needs to act as a neutral arbiter in the process (of course one would hope that the United Nations would not authorize a peacekeeping operation without such a precondition).

Second and more broadly the peace accord and the subsequent operation of the force should be a product of negotiations and agreement among as many significant political groupings as possible. An agreement between the South African government and the ANC alone runs the risk of breaking down if Inkatha or other tribal groupings do not cooperate. Tribal or homeland leaders will need to sign on as their assistance will be essential in implementing any agreement. Of course one might expect that it will be impossible to satisfy some groups especially those on the extreme right wing. Yet as long as including various groups in the talks does not undermine an agreement of some sort between as many groups as possible then there is an advantage to

24 Namibia Rebels Misread Accord? *New York Times* 7 April 1989 p 3

25 Crocker Southern Africa Peace Making

consulting all factions in the process and making each a direct signatory to the pact. The ANC has already taken steps in this direction by forming a coalition with groups such as the Pan Africanist Congress in talks with the de Klerk government.

Third the peacekeeping group could assign a liaison to all political groups in the implementation phase of the process. This together with the dispute resolution mechanism can help prevent any breakdowns along the way. Working closely with the subnational actors in South Africa will be necessary to manage the disagreements, avoid the active opposition and mitigate the misunderstandings that are likely to arise between all the groups. Such actions probably cannot guarantee that support will be universal or that all violence will be prevented, but overall success will largely depend on how the United Nations addresses the question of subnational actors.

Conclusion

Apartheid in South Africa has had broad implications beyond the borders of that country. It has been an issue in Cold War politics with policy toward South Africa constituting another split between the United States and the Soviet Union. It has jeopardized regional security by pitting South Africa against its neighbors with resulting externally sponsored civil wars and numerous border incursions with bloody results. It has also dominated the agenda of successive United Nations sessions. Yet now the prospects for ending apartheid and turning the country over to majority rule are on the horizon. We have argued that United Nations peacekeeping forces will likely play a central role in supervising the democratic elections that are central to that transition process.

When U.N. peacekeeping forces assume the role of election supervisors in South Africa, they have the potential to usher in two very different scenarios. One envisions the election process to be done with minimal violence and stable functioning of the government during the transition phase. The election will be conducted in an even handed fashion with a high turnout. The results will be certified as fair by the United Nations and all parties. One might then look back to the election as a turning point establishing peace, security and justice in South Africa and perhaps in the region as a whole. The second scenario is considerably more pessimistic. There the pre-election phase is marked by widespread violence among various political groups. The South African government will have done its best to influence the outcome of the election through fraud and intimidation. The election process will be considered seriously flawed, such that several groups will not accept the results. A civil war will commence following the election to determine control of the government, an issue that ironically was supposed to be settled peacefully by the election.

It is unrealistic to argue that these two extremes are the only scenarios possible for South Africa. Nevertheless, the other scenarios probably fall within the range of the two. United Nations peacekeeping will have a significant influence on whether the actual outcome is closer to one extreme or the other. Based on the Namibian experience, we have argued that the United Nations must take the following steps to insure a positive result: (1) send an adequately sized peacekeeping force, (2) ensure the neutrality of the force, (3) create mechanisms to resolve disputes over the operation, (4) limit the power of the white government during the election process, and (5) make efforts to obtain the support of relevant subnational groups. These steps may not guarantee the success of the U.N. operation, but their absence may represent a lost opportunity to achieve peace and stability in the southern cone of Africa.