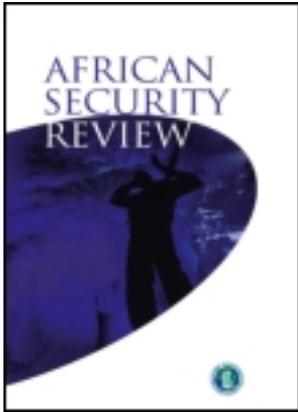


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Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



African Security Review

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rasr20>

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Version of record first published: 21 Feb 2013.

To cite this article: Lindy Heinecken & Henrietta Bwalya (2013): Compensating military veterans in South Africa, African Security Review, 22:1, 30-46

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2012.752396>

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Compensating military veterans in South Africa

What if we cannot pay the bill?

Lindy Heinecken and Henrietta Bwalya

This article outlines the widespread needs of South African military veterans and the possible consequences if the promises made in the recent Military Veterans Act are not met. The first part of the article defines who generally qualifies as a military veteran, how they are typically compensated in various countries with specific reference to neighbouring southern African countries, and what the consequences are when veterans become disenfranchised with the state. The second part focuses on South Africa and the recent debates on military veterans and their entitlements. With reference to the findings of a qualitative study conducted among military veterans, parliamentary debates and media reports, an assessment is made of the demands and affordability of promised benefits and the consequences should the state not deliver. The conclusion is reached that heightened expectations are presently frustrated by slow roll-outs, and this is likely to increase the possibility of protest action. This has now the potential to create further tension within the ruling party and civil society, as the pressure on public finances mounts and demands become unsustainable. The effect this may have on political stability will depend on how the government manages this issue.

Keywords military veterans, compensation, benefits, protest action, political instability

Introduction

In April 2012 about 250 military veterans marched to the offices of the City of Johannesburg demanding special treatment and compensation for their role in the liberation struggle. This action represented what the South African National Military Veterans' Association

(SANMVA) called the start of unprecedented mass action unless the promises implied in the Military Veterans Act, No. 18 of 2011, were realised.¹ The pent-up anger among the military veterans has been a long time coming and is an issue which the South African government has been grappling with since the start of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process (DDR) in 1996. Essential questions of how to honour, treat and compensate military veterans who fought for the liberation of the country persist, and the need to address this has been declared 'a matter of extreme urgency'.² At present, the concern has less to do with the threat they may pose to society and political stability than the threat to the African National Congress (ANC) and its leaders.³

The protests by veterans came at a time when the ANC was preparing to celebrate its hundredth year of existence and hold its National Elective Conference. The Umkhonto we-Sizwe Military Veterans' Association (MKMVA) is an influential voting block and has come out strongly in support of President Jacob Zuma. Some have even accused the MKMVA 'of behaving like the president's private army threatening to beat up those opposed to his re-election'.⁴ Many of these veterans now serve in other security structures of government like the police and military, in politics and in the private sector. A considerable number, however, have not found meaningful employment due to their lack of education, marketable skills and a high level of unemployment in the country. Despite the fact that they were willing to sacrifice their lives and rights for democracy, many continue to live in abject poverty, and feel used, neglected and marginalised in the new political dispensation.⁵ They are experiencing a sense of relative deprivation compared to others who have benefited from the new political dispensation and are becoming more vocal in demanding that their needs be addressed.

According to the theory of relative deprivation, people who feel deprived compared to others in terms of 'sufficient income, employment, political rights or basic social dignity may engage in organised collective behaviour to bring about a more just state of affairs'.⁶ Relative deprivation arises when people experience some disadvantage arising from a specific comparison within a particular reference group. Whereas severe deprivation leads to bitter resignation, slight improvements in conditions often lead to rising expectations and revolutionary fever. Rising expectations and promises make things worse when, with time, there is no progress in needs satisfaction.⁷ One of the ironies, according to relative deprivation theory, is that people are more likely to mobilise and embark on protest action when conditions are improving. As will be shown in this study, for a very long time military veterans experienced 'bitter resignation' but now have high expectations that their needs will be met under the new Military Veterans Act. However, due to the slow roll-out of these benefits, levels of frustration are rising and there are signs of imminent collective action.

Resource mobilisation theory clearly indicates that deprived and frustrated individuals are more likely to engage in collective action when they are organised in formal structures or powerful lobby groups. What triggers collective action more than just deprivation is the availability of resources that enable protest action to be effective. Resources include not only the financial means to organise protests, but the psychological, social or other tangible assets that provide the means to bring about change.⁸ Hence, collective action is more likely when there is a strong organisational base, when the necessary financial, leadership and organisational resources exist, and when people are organised into a distinct entity, or interest group.⁹ In other words, they share a collective identity. Military veterans possess all of these qualities, with the added skill of being trained for collective violence. Not surprisingly, protests by marginalised or neglected former liberation fighters are viewed by some as a threat to national stability.¹⁰ Many are now pondering whether South Africa's military veterans will embark on

mass action as other ex-combatants in neighbouring countries like Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia and Angola have done, and what the political consequences may be.

Against this background, in this study we seek to answer the following questions. To what extent are ex-combatants entitled to preferential state assistance, vis-à-vis other citizens? Who qualify as military veterans and how are they generally compensated? What happens when states are not able to adequately reintegrate or compensate ex-combatants? To establish the mood on the ground, interviews were conducted with South African military veterans from the former liberation or non-statutory forces resident in the Western Cape. Due to constraints of length, we do not attempt to engage in the wider debates on DDR in South Africa and elsewhere. These have been discussed adequately and at length by others.¹¹ The purpose of this study is merely to provide an overview of current developments and why the issue of military veterans, which continues to be marginalised in current debates (e.g. there is no mention of military veterans in the Defence Review, 2012), warrants interrogation. Furthermore, the intention is not to portray military veterans as a looming threat in South Africa, but to posit what the political consequences may be if the discontent among military veterans continues to escalate.

Why military veterans are a special case

In the first part of this article, we provide a general description of who constitutes a military veteran, how they are generally compensated and what happens when their aspirations are not met, with reference to examples from southern Africa. This comparative perspective is merely to provide context to the recent developments in South Africa, and is by no means an in-depth analysis of the various DDR processes in these countries. The focus is primarily on the reintegration phase of DDR, with reference to who qualifies as a military veteran or ex-combatant, what types of assistance and benefits are generally provided and what the consequences are when these are deemed inadequate or unsustainable.

Who is a military veteran?

When investigating issues relating to military veterans, one is confronted with a multiplicity of definitions as to who constitutes a military or war veteran. Examples from Europe indicate that definitions range from a person in uniform who has merely received a day's pay in the services, to those who have completed military service (a term contract) or have been actively deployed or engaged in war, and may even extend to conscripts.¹² From this one can deduce that military veterans are defined differently based on national, rather than international, criteria. The same applies to combatants who have taken part in liberation struggles, with the added difficulty that these soldiers are often not formally appointed, clearly defined, and sometimes fight under pseudonyms, making it difficult to know who qualifies as a military veteran and for how long they have served.

In this regard, Markus Kostner and Edith H. Bowles provide examples of how veterans from liberation struggles are generally defined.¹³ In Zimbabwe, the term 'war veteran' has specific political connotations. A war veteran is any person who underwent military training and participated, consistently and persistently, in the liberation struggle. This may even include child soldiers and dependents of veterans who have suffered due to the loss of or separation from their parents. In Mozambique, a military veteran is a citizen who has actively participated in the liberation struggle, but extends beyond those who served as combatants to

include anyone involved in the struggle, including those who served as militants, informants and diplomats, and those involved in propaganda.¹⁴ Similarly, the new Veterans Act of 2008 in Namibia defines a veteran as ‘any person who was a member of the liberation forces who consistently and persistently participated or engaged in any political, diplomatic or underground activity in furtherance of the liberation struggle, or was arrested for such activities.’¹⁵ What is evident from all of these definitions is that the status of military veteran is rooted in the liberation struggle, and tends to exclude those who fought for the other side.

South Africa presents a somewhat different case. Given that the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) consists of seven different integrated forces, it is not surprising that the definition is rather inclusive. The Military Veterans Act, 2011, defines a military veteran as:

A South African citizen who rendered military service in any statutory and non-statutory organisation, on all sides of the liberation War, from 1960 to 1994. A military veteran is also someone who served in the Union Defence Force before 1961; or became a member of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) after 1994, and has completed his/her military training and no longer performs military service, and has not been dishonourably discharged from that military organisation or force.¹⁶

This broad definition has raised the question whether former white male conscripts who fought for the South African Defence Force (SADF) during apartheid qualify as military veterans. The sentiment in this regard is that conscripts were not full-time members of the SADF, and thus not deserving of government assistance. In this regard, the Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Thabang Makwetla, was quite clear that while the definition of a military veteran is broad, the proposed social assistance scheme is primarily aimed at former liberation forces and those in the statutory forces whose names appear on the state’s database.¹⁷

Military veterans’ compensation

Whether serving in national armed forces or as part of the liberation forces, these are people who have been prepared to sacrifice their lives for the greater good. For this reason, most countries afford military veterans a special status and compensate them by means of pensions or other social grants. However, just as military veterans are defined differently in respective countries, so there is no universal standard or blueprint on compensation.¹⁸ There is great variation in veterans’ benefits across countries and categories of veterans. Benefits may include entitlements written into law such as pensions, or other forms of monetary or in-kind assistance.¹⁹ The most commonly used reintegration mechanisms are cash payments, psychological support, vocational training, apprenticeships, formal education, job generation, support for job seeking, access to land, credit, technical assistance, and support in identifying market needs.²⁰

In Zimbabwe, the liberation struggle veterans received financial assistance to start small-scale enterprises and skills training, and all received some form of pension.²¹ In addition to the welfare benefits, the Zimbabwe war vets were promised 20 per cent of all land that was to be acquired by the state for resettlement and residential purposes.²² Mozambique afforded ex-soldiers an 18-month subsidy and an agricultural kit to help them resettle into civilian life.²³ Namibian veterans received a gratuity payment, skills development training through a scheme called the Development Brigade, and direct government employment.²⁴ In Angola, liberation fighters and their children under the age of 18 were eligible to receive a car every five years, an annual subsidy, a monthly pension, and free travel abroad for medical reasons.²⁵

In South Africa, after the liberation struggle ended, the veterans in the statutory forces could leave and apply for severance packages based on their years of service, choosing to receive either a lump sum or monthly pension payouts. Those serving in the liberation forces not integrated into the SANDF were eligible for a one-off gratuity payment depending on the year they joined (see Table 1).

Table 1 Scale of compensation for non-statutory force members

Year joined	Gratuity amount
1961–1972	R42 058
1973–1967	R34 313
1977–1982	R28 721
1983–1989	R20 201
1990–1994	R12 734

Source Department of Defence, *Defence Review Report*, 1998.²⁶

Many problems were experienced with these payouts in terms of delays, actual amounts and who qualified.²⁷ This created considerable tension and those who did not qualify soon rioted in protest. Besides these payouts, liberation veterans also received limited counselling over a two-week period on personal matters, careers, social services and finances. An opportunity to join the Service Corps set up in January 1995 for 18 months to receive training in basic skills, life skills and adult literacy was also provided. Few in fact took up this opportunity, partly because it was presented by persons from the former SADF and partly because the training offered was neither attractive nor market related.

Discontent with respect to the way liberation veterans were compensated continued, and was later specified in the Special Pensions Act, No. 96 of 1996. This Act made provision for special pensions to be paid to persons who made sacrifices or served the public interest in the cause of establishing a democratic constitutional order. According to the payment schedule stipulated in this Act, those 35 years old, but younger than 45, received R6 000 plus R1 200 for each year of service exceeding five years, but less than or equal to 20 years. Liberation veterans who were older than 45 years but younger than 65 years received R12 000 plus R1 200 for each year of service exceeding five years but less than 20 years. Payment for those 65 years and older was R24 000, plus R1 200 for each year of service. Where years of service exceeded 25 years, a fixed amount of R84 000 was given.²⁸ This was a one-off payment and failed to provide a sustainable solution.

Many remain destitute due to a lack of basic education and marketable skills, as well as the social skills needed for successful economic and social integration.²⁹ A report by the Atlantic Philanthropies titled 'Only Useful Until Democracy' and cited in *The Irish Times* (2011) states that of the 1 200 veterans interviewed:

- 17 per cent said they had been injured fighting and left with a permanent disability.
- 56 per cent still relive their experience while awake; a similar proportion suffer from combat-related nightmares.
- 13 per cent were classified as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, defined as a pathological anxiety that occurs after someone experiences or witnesses life-threatening trauma.
- 60 per cent were single as they are unable to form stable relationships.

- 64 per cent were students when they entered the conflict, bearing out frequent accounts of giving up their chance of an education to join the armed struggle – which they wanted to be compensated for.
- 26 per cent had completed secondary school.
- 70 per cent were unemployed, almost three times the national rate of 25 per cent.
- 73 per cent believed South Africa's political leaders had forgotten about them after apartheid was defeated.
- 84 per cent said the compensation they received was inadequate.
- 47 per cent said they had 'wasted their time for nothing' when asked whether they had achieved anything for themselves by getting involved in the armed struggle.
- 34 per cent said they would not get involved again if a similar situation arose.³⁰

Their plight only really received earnest attention in 2007, at the ANC's National Conference in Polokwane, whereafter the name of the Department of Defence (DOD) was expanded to include military veterans in 2009. Now, 18 years after the establishment of South Africa's democracy, the compensation of military veterans remains an issue. This is reflected in the report by the Minister of Finance to the portfolio committee on defence and Veterans affairs regarding the payment of special pensions to those who took part in the liberation struggle. Of the 22 000 applicants, only 2 000 have been approved and a great deal of controversy remains in terms of how this is being administered.³¹

Consequences of inadequate compensation

When the compensation and reintegration of military veterans is not managed properly, the consequences for the entire country can be dire. One of the most cited cases is that of Zimbabwe. Mazarire and Rupiya claim that the 'absence of a dedicated policy pushed the country to the brink of economic collapse and engendered social and political strife'.³² Maladministration by the state of the welfare funds on which many of the unemployed veterans depended resulted in rolling protests by the military veterans' associations. In 1997, this led to the hasty establishment of a War Veterans' Compensation Scheme, administered by a new Ministry of War Veterans.³³ This resulted in huge unbudgeted payouts and further privileges and grants to ex-combatants, which were neither affordable nor sustainable. These lavish grants soon resulted in public tension over state expenditure as inflation soared and the economy entered a downward spiral.³⁴ Veterans became the subject of political manipulation by President Robert Mugabe, who encouraged them to invade thousands of white-owned farms. This eventually led to the demise of Zimbabwe's agricultural sector and pushed the country to economic collapse.³⁵ This case shows how military veterans can become a threat to a nation's stability if badly managed or when abused as a 'force' by a ruling party.³⁶

Military veterans have also protested in other neighbouring countries. In Mozambique, Chris Alden reports that when the reintegration needs of military veterans were not met, this resulted in 'riots in the assembly areas, disruptions in military barracks and marches on the Mozambican national assembly by discontented ex-soldiers'.³⁷ In Namibia ex-combatants have protested over their poor conditions compared to the ruling elite. This led to the establishment of the Socio-Economic Integration Programme for Ex-Combatants, which aimed at affirmative action job placements in the public service for about 11 950 ex-combatants.³⁸ Progress in this regard appears to be slow and Lalli Metsola reports that the children of the liberation have threatened to withdraw their votes from the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO)

if their plight is not addressed.³⁹ Similarly, in Angola, dissent among war veterans has reached fever pitch, threatening the support for the ruling Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) party. In July 2012 they embarked on a series of protests over unpaid pensions and have demanded a lump sum demobilisation gratuity of US\$550 and a monthly pension. Gwinyayi Dzinesa claims that 'Angola's war veterans have not been adequately integrated into society through, for instance, being offered financial guarantees, vocational rehabilitation assistance and post-war trauma counselling.'⁴⁰ This has led to the establishment of a separate Ministry of Veteran Affairs to take care of veterans' matters.⁴¹

Of interest is that in all of these countries, veterans have organised themselves into ex-combatants or veterans associations, which act as influential lobby or pressure groups. According to Kostner and Bowles these associations, 'while generally pursuing their legitimate objectives are also susceptible to manipulation by political groupings to further interests unrelated to veterans' interests and can become a source of political instability.'⁴² They can become an influential political group that places pressure on the government to address their interests, draining state coffers and jeopardising the economic well-being of a country, as seen in the case of Zimbabwe.⁴³ In most cases, military veterans' associations emerge when they feel that their leaders have abandoned them. This has been the case not only in Zimbabwe, but also in Namibia and Mozambique, where they have embarked on protest action and been engaged in violent conflict.⁴⁴

Similarly, in South Africa, military veterans organised into associations have embarked on a series of protests, demanding jobs, business opportunities and land. Some have been implicated in a number of violent crimes, including cash-in-transit heists, ATM bombings and farm murders.⁴⁵ They are demanding a more revolutionary approach to land reform and have threatened mass action if the state does not deliver.⁴⁶ Similar to the reactive attempts of South Africa's neighbours, the government created a special Department of Military Veterans (DMV) attached to the DOD in 2009, to deal with veterans' issues, and promulgated the Military Veterans Act, 2011 to compensate needy ex-combatants. An amount of R19 623 billion has been set aside over the next five years for veterans.⁴⁷ This is quite substantial if one considers that the total current annual budget allocation for the DOD in the 2012/13 financial year is R37,5 billion.

Complicating the payouts to military veterans is the fact that there are some twenty veterans' organisations in South Africa affiliated with the Council of Military Veterans' Organisations of South Africa (CMVO).⁴⁸ All of these associations, including the associations of the former liberation forces, such as the MKMVA and the Azanian People's Liberation Army Military Veterans' Association (APLAMVA), now reside under the umbrella institution SANMVA. The SANMVA was established in September 2008 to support military veterans and provide them with information about government activities aimed at helping them.⁴⁹ The formation of the SANMVA can be seen as an attempt by the government to coordinate, control and defuse the potentially volatile situation that is emerging between the more vocal liberation force associations and the others. At this stage, the SANMVA does not represent a cohesive force, although it is the only officially sanctioned voice of the veterans according to the Military Veterans Act, 2011.

Research Methodology

Against this background, we now move on to the empirical research. Individual interviews were conducted with representatives from the newly established SANMVA and a researcher from the Parliamentary Defence Committees, as well as the Mayor of Worcester, who was involved in drafting the new policies for the Department of Defence and Veterans Affairs.

These respondents were asked to comment on why the Military Veterans Bill had taken so long to promulgate; how the means test criteria was established; what they thought would happen if the veterans did not receive the expected benefits; how they would describe the current mood among the veterans; and what channels of redress there were when veterans wished to appeal if their applications for compensation are not successful.

In order to obtain the views of military veterans themselves, focus group interviews were conducted in various locations in the Stellenbosch, Cape Town, Worcester and Calitzdorp area from September to October 2011. The selection of the Western Cape and these locations as a site of research was not purposive, but because a number of veterans' meetings were taking place in the area at the time, and for convenience given the locale of the researchers. It can be that veterans in other provinces may hold other or stronger views on the matters raised. In terms of the selection of respondents for the focus groups, a snowball sampling method was used to identify potential respondents. As a starting point, a number of veterans who had submitted letters to parliament were contacted and requested to assist in identifying people to partake in this study. Focus group interviews comprising between five to eight people were conducted. A total of 48 participants took part in this study, of which most were black (African and coloured) and only six were women. Of the respondents, 12 were from Umkhonto weSizwe (MK) and the remaining 36 were from the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA). The sample is thus skewed in favour of APLA representatives and black males.

Each group was asked the following: to provide some background about their experiences in the liberation movements; whether they consider themselves eligible for benefits; whether they know what benefits they are entitled to; what their needs are; what type of action they might take if they do not qualify for benefits; how they would describe the mood among the military veterans; and what type of collective action they think veterans will take if they do not get these grants. As soon as the interviews reached a level of saturation – in other words, were no longer bringing forth new information – the study was concluded. It should be noted that the research results obtained from this small sample cannot be generalised. We nonetheless feel that the participants in this study reflect the general mood among the military veterans, as the findings resonate with the views expressed in parliament, the media and other research reports.

In addition, the SANMVA's strategic planning workshop held on 16 September 2011 in Cape Town was attended. The purpose of this workshop was to discuss the 100-day programme of action for military veterans in the Western Cape. It provided valuable insights into how the SANMVA plans to improve the quality of life of the military veterans. The meeting was attended by approximately 30 members from various military veterans associations, as well as by representatives from a number of businesses.

Ethical approval for this research was granted by Stellenbosch University and the CMVO. All participants signed a consent form and were briefed on the study before commencing. Information was recorded anonymously and the participants' confidentiality was assured. The study was limited to military veterans of the former liberation forces, as they are considered the veterans forming the largest group needing support.

Findings: compensation, costs and consequences

In the following section, the findings on how military veterans should be compensated, the reasons why veterans feel entitled to compensation, how this should be implemented and what the consequences could be if the state does not deliver, are presented.

Military veterans' need for compensation

The research confirmed the widespread sentiment that military veterans feel neglected and abandoned by the ANC government and experience a sense of relative deprivation compared to those who are now benefiting from democracy.⁵⁰ They believe strongly that without them, the ANC would not be where it is today, but feel rejected by government. One disappointed MK veteran said: 'I don't know what is difficult because they knew us. The parliament they have now, they got it through us. My heart is not complete and I feel very bad.' Another stated that: 'The present government does not look after us like veterans in other countries. Veterans in other countries are looked after by their government.' A number of participants indicated that they are grieved to see the 'fruits of their hard labour being enjoyed by other people whilst they get nothing'. A former APLA soldier put it this way: 'This thing is like you are in a relay – you run, you give the stick to the next person but the person who gets remembered at the end of the day is the one who did not start the race.'

One APLA veteran even expressed his regret that he fought for liberation: 'I am now regretting my contribution to the revolution of the country. If I had stayed like other colleagues of mine where I have grown up, like my town mates, maybe now I would have had education or been employed.' Throughout the interviews the military veterans constantly made reference to others who are now in 'big government positions'. One elderly former MK soldier said 'when some of us were in prison, they were seven years old. Today, they are the ones who can have 100 million rands'. They expressed disappointment in the manner in which government has failed to recognise their needs – 'we are not being accommodated today and we are not known, by the very same people we were fighting for'.

The majority of military veterans interviewed indicated that they have not received any compensation since the struggle ended. Some were receiving the Special Pensions Grant, but consider this too little when compared to the pensions of persons who had served for the same length of time in the former SADF. One MK veteran stated: 'I have received my special pension but it is not a big amount as compared to those from SADF with the same status as mine.' A number have had their applications rejected and complain that there is no consistency in the allocation of the Special Pensions Grant. One participant reported that his application has been rejected and it is making him angrier: 'I have not received any benefits up to now. I tried to apply for the Special Pensions Grant but they denied it.' Another stated that 'there is this guy I was with in jail in 1960, and he is getting pension, but I am not getting any'. This has increased his levels of frustration and sense of relative deprivation.

It is clear that military veterans feel entitled to compensation based on the sacrifices they made for democracy. Many stated that they sacrificed their education for the liberation struggle and are angry about this, as reflected in the following quote:

This country was not liberated by educated people. Some of us left school and went into exile. And then when you come back, the people who were your enemies are now your superiors and they tell you that you are not educated. How can you be educated in a country that suppresses even the education? The education we were being given was suppressing us. It was totally different as compared to the people who benefited from apartheid.

Figure 1 House of a military veteran interviewed in Calitzdorp



There was a sense that those who remained in the country and did not go into exile, are now in a better position because they could continue with their schooling. This is also affecting their children, because as one MK veteran explained: 'We cannot take our kids to school. Some of our kids have passed Grade 12, but we don't have money for them to study further. MK has tried to assist us but they don't have funds to give us bursaries. SANMVA and the Ministry of Defence and Veterans are our last hope.'

What these responses indicate is that the cycle of poverty and lack of opportunity based on the inability to obtain a decent education is perpetuated under the current regime. Their rights to employment, education, health services and housing continue to be infringed. One of the most pressing needs expressed by the veterans is housing. Many live in squatter camps in conditions such as those displayed in the picture taken of a house of a military veteran interviewed in Calitzdorp. Many live in shacks, or even on the streets.

Other needs included assistance with transport and medical benefits. Many don't have transport or the means to pay for transport to look for work and attend meetings, and many are frail. The chairperson of the SANMVA indicated that many require health care: 'Some cannot walk, so we need wheelchairs. Others cannot see, so we need associations dealing with health to be involved in this.' As indicated under the heading dealing with compensation, many suffer from post-traumatic stress or injuries incurred during the liberation struggle. Psychological, health and social problems are commonplace, and are confirmed by earlier studies.⁵¹

Costs and criteria for compensation

In more recent years, heated debates have emerged around the criteria for compensation, one of which has been age. Based on the Certified Personnel Registrar (CPR) data recorded prior to the integration of the various forces, an estimated 25 per cent of members from the liberation forces were 15 years old or younger in 1994. This has raised questions about the integrity of the data, resulting in some 3 440 applications being rejected in the period January 2009 to December 2010.⁵² In the interviews, several of the veterans indicated that they were teenagers when they joined the struggle and now feel sidelined because they don't qualify for the compensation based on their age.

According to one APLA member, there were three types of youth in the struggle, namely 'the youth of the 40s and 70s that ended up at Robben Island and in exile and the youth of the 80s who were the youth of the revolution. We are the youth that were instructed by Oliver Tambo to make South Africa ungovernable but are now not regarded as veterans and are excluded in the current Act.' The latter group are typically those youths involved in the self-defence units (SDUs) who were responsible for the internal unrest in the mid-1980s. Referring to debates on the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) website, it is clear that confusion exists in terms of the criteria or 'means test' and how this is going to be applied to these various groups. The Military Veterans Act, 2011 provides no clear guidelines on this. It only mentions that the Minister is responsible for the regulations relating to the criteria. The means test poses another challenge in terms of the implementation of this Act, as certain veterans will inevitably be excluded. Already, in April 2011, during the parliamentary debates, there was confusion and discontent over the preferential treatment granted to veterans of the liberation struggle.⁵³

The Military Veterans Act, 2011 has specified what benefits will be provided. These include compensation for those who have incurred disabling injuries and suffer from severe psychological and neuro-psychiatric trauma as a result of participation in military activities, and for those suffering from serious mental illness and post-traumatic stress; honouring and memorialising fallen military veterans; education, training and skills development; facilitating employment placements; facilitation of, or advice on, business opportunities; subsidisation or provision of transport; pension; access to health care; housing and burial support. In terms of cost, this has raised much concern over how the government is going to transform policy into practice.

As indicated, the total cost is estimated to be in the region of R19 623 billion. Moreover, the costing of the benefits was based on the 'assumed' number of those qualifying. This may pose a problem in the event that all who are registered on the veterans' database should qualify. As indicated in Table 2 and duplicated from a report on the initial costing of benefits for military veterans discussed by the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Defence, if the number of military veterans who qualify for benefits is different from the 'assumed' number, then the liability is scaled down.⁵⁴

The question is whether the state and the various departments of Social Development, Health, Transport, and Human Settlements are able to deliver on these promises. The problem is that these state departments also have to cater for the broader population and may face resistance if they favour military veterans. This is a concern, as ultimately the Department of Defence and Military Veterans Affairs can be held accountable for failing to deliver by the other departments. Currently, the state is working hand in hand with the SANMVA to help identify the priority implementation areas.

Table 2 Costs in relation to qualifying beneficiaries (R' billion)

Benefit type	All qualify	Assumed number qualify
Pension	34,1	1,86
Healthcare	13,1	13,013
Transport	4,1	1,106
Housing	6,7	2,4
Honouring & memorialisation	0,6	0,681
Education	6,2	0,557
Employment	0,2	0,02
Business opportunity	0,2	0,02
Total cost	65,2	19,623

Another problem area is the provision of benefits to dependents of veterans. During the debates, it was argued that illegitimate children should enjoy the same recognition as legitimate children in African cultures. The CMVO further argued that the definition of 'dependents' did not make it clear whether or not the dependents of deceased veterans were included. The DMV clarified that certain benefits were available to veterans or to both veterans and their dependents, subject to satisfying the applicable means test. Subject to the means test, a veteran may qualify for other social assistance benefits. Eligibility was not based on age or disability, but on the applicable means test prescribed in the regulations.

Motumi explained that the definition of 'dependent' used in the Bill (now Act) was in accordance with the definition in other current legislation. The wife and minor children of a military veteran were considered to be dependents. Depending on the relevant legislation, a minor child was younger than age 18 or age 21. Dependent children were considered to be younger than age 18, unless the child was school-going, in which case proof must be provided on an annual basis.

Consequences if compensation fails

The military veterans interviewed had mixed feelings about the Military Veterans Act, 2011 and whether it will deliver on its promises. As one veteran said:

They have come up with this Act where a lot of things need to be verified by someone who has never been involved in military action. The Bill does not speak to us 100%. It has some clauses that don't force the government departments to assist the veterans under SANMVA and it is not clear what assistance we will get. We are just hanging there.

Despite feelings of anger, neglect and deprivation at the time of the interviews, few said that they would embark on collective action to place pressure on the ANC government to have their needs met.

Most were committed to ongoing dialogue as the way to air their grievances. A veteran responded by saying: 'It is not something we can plan; we do not plan anything against the government. We can't decide what kind of action we are going to take. We cannot put the

government at ransom because some people have not qualified for the benefits. Sometimes we have to analyse why the benefits are not given and why people do not qualify.' Similarly, an MK veteran stated: 'The freedom that we won has been done in a very tough and hard way. A lot of blood and tears have been spilt, so we must treasure what we have. I am very much in favour of the fighting for another form of freedom. And this freedom is called peace.' Another veteran responded by saying 'the only solution we need is someone to come and listen to our cries with a good ear. We cannot say we will take action. There is no action we can take until we sit down'. His colleague added: 'We are going to do something that is ethical.' Another MK veteran said: 'We need to calm down; this is our government, our black government.'

In our interview with him, the Mayor of Worcester pointed out that the military veterans would not opt for collective action and did not want to threaten the ANC. They did not want to create a situation that could result in civil war. He said they did this mainly because they knew the government had started looking after their interests: 'Now the veterans know that their cases are on the tables of parliament, they are siding with the ANC and they are protecting the ANC and the Constitution.' Similarly, the researcher from Parliament also felt that collective action was not likely:

[T]o start with, it is unlikely that there will be a lot of cases where people will not qualify to be military veterans. There is an available Certified Personnel Register (CPR) where all the veterans were registered and those that qualified were reintegrated into the South Africa National Defence Force. That's the first thing. If not found on the CPR they must first appeal and someone else must verify that they indeed were part of the struggle.

What he did not say was whether the government could afford the benefits offered out of state coffers, or how the means test would be administered. The danger of the means test evoking a sense of relative deprivation should not be underestimated. In Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Namibia for example, issues around the means test resulted in protests and riots. Based on the findings of this study, the military veterans reported that they would not engage in collective action (at the time) because of their loyalty towards the ANC. Yet, merely six months after this research was completed, a few veterans, frustrated with the slow progress of compensation, embarked on protest action. On 20 April 2012, 250 former MK and APLA liberation fighters took to the streets demanding special discounts on city bus services, that 10 per cent of business opportunities created by the city must go to ex-combatants, special housing allocations, dedicated skills-development programmes, bursaries and the need to push for a revolutionary approach to land reform.

Conclusions

This study set out to explore the needs and levels of relative deprivation among military veterans, and the implications should the state be unable to compensate them adequately. Based on the literature and findings of this study there is a strong indication that the needs of the military veterans are extensive, and that they are experiencing a deep sense of relative deprivation. Merely six months ago, when the empirical research for this study took place, the military veterans were elated that the government was finally addressing their concerns; this mood has now turned as they are becoming increasingly impatient. Pressure on the state is mounting and if one can draw lessons from the experiences of South Africa's neighbouring states, the

signs are worrying. One just has to look across the border to Zimbabwe to see the effect, and lengths a state can be forced to go to appease military veterans and the economic and political instability this can create. On the one hand, these are the people who have fought for their country, for freedom or liberation. On the other, they have the potential to become a destabilising force as they are able to impose great pressure on the state to heed to their demands.

For this reason, as well as issues of loyalty, identity and legitimacy, governments generally afford military veterans a special status in society and compensate them in various ways. Whether from national or liberation forces, they are afforded benefits not assigned to normal civilians. However, who qualifies for these benefits, especially with respect to liberation forces that do not have accurate records of their soldiers, is often problematic. From the examples cited, it is clear that compensation can remain an issue long after the initial DDR process has been completed. Marginalised and neglected military veterans, who have not been adequately integrated into society and thus lack employment and live in abject poverty, often start placing pressure on national governments for restitution for years to come.

This occurs most often when military veterans experience a sense of relative deprivation compared to others who fought alongside them but are better off. A sense of disillusionment and resentment sets in towards former leaders.⁵⁵ As seen, these veterans occupy an important group in the body politic and when they are organised into associations can act as a political force compelling governments to institutionalise mechanisms to address the needs and expectations of veterans.⁵⁶ It is this pressure, now eighteen years after the liberation war ended, that has pushed the ANC government to promulgate the Military Veterans Act, 2011, which attempts to address the needs of military veterans. In meeting these needs, some 2 500 military veterans have already been placed on the database of the South African Military Health Services (SAMHS) and will soon have access to health care.⁵⁷ This is a good start and may mitigate collective action, but it is a far cry from meeting the greater needs of housing, transport and employment.

While mechanisms have been instituted to deal with the various needs of veterans, which have raised their hopes and expectations, there appears to be a gap between policy formulation and actual implementation, which could lead to further discontent. Actual roll-out comes from the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and the SANMVA, neither of which is fully operational. The newly established DMV does not have the staff or capacity to deal with the enormity of the challenge that the military veterans pose, especially if one considers that the number of military veterans – an estimated 56 000 – is not far off the number employed in the full-time forces of the SANDF. The promises made are extensive and while the Military Veterans Act, 2011 has the potential to improve the quality of life of veterans, ‘the challenge of adequate funding, human capital, ability to operationalise plans and monitor and evaluate its implementation are likely to impact on the delivery of the benefits and service to military veterans’.⁵⁸ The implication is that the wait may be very long and, as the former Minister of Defence and Veterans Affairs has stated, ‘this is a matter of urgency ... time is of essence’, as the veterans are growing impatient.⁵⁹

Then there is the issue of the means test, in terms of who qualifies, and for what. This is bound to be a major point of contention. Relative deprivation will soon emerge where certain groups feel they have been disadvantaged when compared to others. Within the ranks of the military veterans and their different associations there are many competing for these concessions, or socio-economic rights. It is unlikely that the SANMVA will be able to contain the tensions between the various associations, given their diversity and political allegiances. In this regard, the SANMVA, which is both an organ of civil society and a statutory body, has

the uneasy task of being the united front for veterans, but without sufficient unity, power or influence to control those it represents.

In this regard, the MKMVA often speaks on its own outside this forum and is a formidable political force. In an attempt to afford them some recognition, the ANC recently awarded medals to the founding fathers of the MK and plans to bestow more honours on members.⁶⁰ One should thus not ignore the potential influence and impact which the MKMVA can have on the ruling party. Military veterans across the globe are a stronghold during elections and generally vote at modestly higher rates than non-veterans.⁶¹ Not surprisingly, the recent protests by military veterans are timely, in light of the ANC National Conference in December 2012. Although many in this study have indicated that they would not pose a threat to democracy and are loyal to the ANC, the discontent within the ranks of the military veterans is real. In fact, the leaders of the MKMVA have recently warned the ruling party that unparalleled mass action will follow if the compensation of military veterans is not addressed with immediate effect.⁶² They have warned that 'unless [the] government helps them properly, some could take matters into their own hands.'⁶³

While it is not immediately evident whether military veterans could be a destabilising force in South Africa, one cannot rule out the possibility. Military veterans constitute a key constituency for the ruling party, and the way the ANC deals with this discontent could have far-reaching implications for the country. As the theory of relative deprivation points out, revolution is most likely where there are rising expectations. Military veterans are a powerful force, with the capacity to mobilise for collective action and violence. They are organised, and have the resources and the military skills. While ideology, political loyalty, identity and solidarity with the ANC may mitigate this, one cannot ignore grassroots sentiments and their potential for action.

One other consequence, not discussed in much detail in this study, is the tension this may create within society between those coming from a 'militarised'-struggle background and ordinary civilians, who may resent the government for privileging military veterans. Given the enormous socio-economic challenges facing the government, and the rising protests over service delivery, careful consideration needs to be given to how these citizens' needs are to be managed versus the demands of military veterans. How the government strikes a balance between the two will be telling in terms of the future political stability of the country.

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