

32 Battalion: Ex-Combatants' Reconstruction of Livelihood since 1993

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Masters of Development Studies

At the

Department of Anthropology and Archaeology

Faculty of Humanities

University of Pretoria

2019

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Acknowledgements

I am humbled by the completion of this thesis and I would like to first and foremost thank God for His guidance and strength throughout this academic journey, it was not easy but He made it possible. To my parents, Nilton and Sandra Mendes, thank you for the constant support and encouragement from the beginning of my academic career; I can never thank you enough Mom and Dad. To my siblings, Regina, Charlie and Daniela Mendes, thank you for the encouragement and the hugs through my tears. I would also like to thank and acknowledge each and every one of my family members, I am immensely blessed. Special thanks to my supervisor, Dr Jimmy Pieterse, your guidance and encouragement made this final step possible. To my friends, each one of you played such a significant role in my journey as I navigated in this study and thus, I thank you and only pray that God blesses you all on my behalf. To Frans van Staden, Noel, Jay and Corlien McDonald, I thank you for introducing me to the Pomfret community and making it such a memorable experience most especially for including me in all the travel plans in 2015. To both my maternal grandmothers, Regina Namumo and Maria Bernardo as well as my late grandfathers, Ciriaco Mendes and Martinho Bernardo, this thesis is dedicated to you. I would also like thank all the participants from Pomfret for sharing their experiences with me. Their time and knowledge are greatly appreciated.

Abstract

This research investigates the ways in which Angolan ex-combatants of 32 Battalion have been making a living since the disbandment of the unit in 1993. Moreover, it seeks to understand the reasons behind the ex-combatants' insistence in remaining in Pomfret (North West) regardless of its deteriorating conditions as well as the South African government's attempts to relocate them elsewhere. Intensive semi-structured interviews and participant observation were conducted in Pomfret with ten participants in Portuguese whilst making use of a recorder and note taking. Archived materials from Wits University were also used in order to supplement the interviews.

Through the 'African nationalist literature' on *askari*, migration and the concept of home and 'sense of community' literature; the main argument is that the Angolan ex-combatants were always trying to find alternatives to secure their social and economic wellbeing away from home (Angola). After the disbandment of 32 Battalion, it was found that whilst some participants tried to find alternative jobs in the security industry, others did not and presently are surviving with their pension grants complimented with support from their children and assistance amongst themselves. The established bonds amongst themselves and the sense of entitlement to the houses as well as attachment to the cemetery is what's tying them to Pomfret.

The result suggests that the South African government needs to engage with the Pomfret residents so as to find a solution that would better the living conditions of the Angolan residents and the maintenance of the rehabilitation of the asbestos should be a priority to avoid more health complications amongst the residents. Moreover, basic social services such as water, electricity, mobile clinic and sanitation should be put in place.

Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY	3
1.1 INTRODUCTION	3
1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	12
1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	13
1.3.1 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY	13
1.4. METHODOLOGY	14
1.4.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	14
1.4.2 SELECTING A STUDY SITE	17
1.4.3 SELECTING PARTICIPANTS AND NEGOTIATING ACCESS.....	19
1.4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION	21
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	23
2.1 INTRODUCTION	23
2.2 LIFE UNDER THE PORTUGUESE: ANTECEDENTS TO THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE	24
2.3 LIFE IN INDEPENDENT ANGOLA: FROM 1975	29
2.4 UNDERSTANDING ‘ASKARIS’	32
2.5 DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION AND REINTEGRATION	33
2.6 MIGRATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE CONCEPT OF HOME AND ‘SENSE OF COMMUNITY’	37
2.7 MIGRATION: NOSTALGIA, MEMORY AND IDENTITY	41
CHAPTER 3: FORMER ANGOLAN EX-COMBATANTS’ LIVELIHOODS POST 1993 IN POMFRET, NORTH WEST	45
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	45
3.2 PARTICIPANTS’ LIFE HISTORIES	46
3.2.1 LIFE HISTORIES: PARTICIPANTS	46
Tio Hugo	46
Tio KK	47
Tio Men	48
Tio Norte	48
Tia Um	49
Tio Cuma	50
Tia Dois.....	50
Pai Grande.....	51
Tio Thomas.....	52
Tio Calmo	52
3.2.2 LIFE HISTORIES DISCUSSION.....	53

3.3 “THE MEDALS ARE HIDDEN IN MY HOUSE BUT WHAT WILL MY CHILDREN EAT?”	54
3.3.1 SEVERANCE PAY	57
3.3.2 SOCIAL CAPITAL.....	58
3.3.3 PENSION FUND.....	61
3.4 GOVERNMENT’S ROLE IN THE EX-COMBATANTS’ LIVELIHOODS: WERE THE PACKAGES OFFERED SUFFICIENT? WHAT ROLE IS THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT PLAYING?	62
CHAPTER 4: “BUFFALO BUFFALO YETO NAWA...POMFRET POMFRET YETO NAWA”	68
4.1 INTRODUCTION	68
4.2 POMFRET COMMUNITY PROFILING.....	69
4.3 WE JOINED 32 BATTALION BECAUSE... ..	71
4.4 “THOSE WHO BROUGHT ME HERE MUST TAKE ME...”	80
4.5 CONCLUSION	87
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	88
REFERENCES	93

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines how former Angolan veterans of 32 Battalion have reconstructed their lives post 1993 and unpacks the reasons the former combatants are adamant in residing in the former asbestos mine, Pomfret, regardless of its deteriorating condition. Moreover, questions of what it means when the participants speak of “home” in the context of migration are important in this thesis, especially when one considers their historical background. These are Angolan born men who found themselves fighting for apartheid South Africa’s notorious 32 Battalion on the Namibian border between 1975 and the 1980s and were relocated to Pomfret in 1989 after Namibia gained independence. One of the most significant observations I made during my fieldwork, was how the participants created a sense of ‘togetherness’ even when facing socioeconomic difficulties and consequently, a sense of community. “...A community...is both about that which is created as a common history, experience or culture of a group – a group’s belongings – and about how the community is attached to places, imagined or real” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992 in Fortier, 2000:1).

The argument that follows is that the veterans found themselves in difficult conditions in Namibia that “pushed” them to join 32 Battalion and that it is through concepts such as memory, sense of place and belonging that the former combatants and their families make sense of their current situation and ultimately “choose” to remain in Pomfret. It also examines the roles that both governments, led by the National Party (NP) and African National Congress (ANC) respectively, have played in the ex-combatants’ current situation. Moreover, through intensive interviews, this work also seeks to determine whether the package plan (money, housing, etc.) offered to the soldiers was sufficient. However, it is important to understand the historical background of 32 Battalion before turning to these issues.

Angola’s fight for independence from the Portuguese gave rise to three main liberation movements: the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (*Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola*) or MPLA; the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*) or UNITA; and *Frente Nacional para a Libertação de Angola* (FNLA)¹. During Angola’s struggle for independence and after South

¹ The MPLA, UNITA and the FNLA were continuously engaged in violent hostilities amongst themselves throughout the liberation period, as they could not agree on post-colonial power. Even after all parties signed the Alvor (cease-fire) Agreement in Portugal in January 1975 and the MPLA declared Angola independent on 11 November of that same year; UNITA and the FNLA refused to accept the MPLA as the ruling government.

Africa's refusal to withdraw from South West Africa (SWA, currently known as Namibia), resolution 2145 of the United Nations (UN) declared that South Africa (SA) could no longer have administrative rights over SWA. The South African Defence Force subsequently formed a group of black ex-FNLA soldiers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and white South African officers who became known as 32 Battalion.

This unit was used as a permanent force-base counter-insurgency unit involved in regular action and warfare on a year-round basis, and it assisted UNITA in the fight against the MPLA and the 'communist threat' between 1976 and 1979.

During this time, Angola was taking a strong stand against apartheid (the system of legislated racial segregation in South Africa under the National Party (NP)) by providing refuge to both ANC and SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation) liberation fighters. During the apartheid era, the aim of 32 Battalion was to cordon off the north of the Namibian-Angolan border while also making it difficult for SWAPO to infiltrate from Angola to Namibia. SWAPO, as the national liberation movement of South West Africa, was determined to fight for its independence from South Africa and initiated the 'Border War'² through its cross-border incursions from the Namibian-Angolan border into South Africa in 1966.

32 Battalion spent years in Angola and at times pretended to be UNITA soldiers. 32 Battalion's soldiers, as well as their dependents, were permanently based in Buffalo Base in the Okavango in SWA (now Namibia). Because of negotiations between Jan Breytenbach³ and the SADF, the members of 32 Battalion had houses, a school with seven Portuguese teachers, remuneration that started at R10 per month and increased to R85, and received food parcels (Nortje 2003). However, 32 Battalion became controversial when Corporal

Through the violent hostilities, the FNLA was defeated in northern Angola and ultimately fractured and consequently, many of its members moved from northern Angola to join South Africa on the border (Graham 2012:2). Furthermore, before the FNLA collapsed in 1978 after the 1975-76 March that took place in Luanda; FNLA soldiers that were fighting in the southern part of Angola were abandoned in SWA. Daniel Chipanda fled the country leaving all the soldiers behind and UNITA took this opportunity to attack the soldiers. Hence, left with no other alternative, many of these soldiers fled to refugee camps situated in southern Angola along the border with SWA. It is from these refugee camps that the SADF recruited the majority of its 32 Battalion soldiers (Bothma, pg. 74-75 and Nortje 2014:144-149).

² 'Border war' borrowed from Baines' book *South Africa's 'Border war': Contested narratives and Conflicting memories* (2014). It is in inverted commas to show the contested nature of the war: from the name itself to its cause and the role of all parties involved.

³ Born in 1933 in Western Cape, Jan Breytenbach was 32 Battalion's Founding Commander.

Trevor John Edwards,⁴ who accused the unit of committing atrocities against Angolan citizens, made their existence public (Nortje, 2003:54). Therefore 32 Battalion came to be seen as the 'enemy' of Angola, Namibia and South Africa amongst their dominant liberation parties, namely MPLA, SWAPO and the ANC's *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK). Yet "the very existence of 32 Battalion remained one of the SADF's best-kept secrets" (Nortje, 2003:54). South Africa's involvement in Angola was similar to the Cold War system with no outright declaration of war and infiltration into the enemy territory took place as clandestine operations.

Angola's struggle for independence soon became part of the Cold War. "The United States thought that if the MPLA gained power through its strong connection with Cuba, there would be the first physical penetration of the Eastern bloc into African affairs" (Ngongo 2012:6). The South African apartheid regime also opposed communism and considered it a threat; thus, it was determined to ensure UNITA stays in power (Gjerstad 1976 in Ngongo 2012:7). Because of the illegitimacy of the war, secrecy was very important and the SADF enforced secrecy through the Defence Act, Official Secrets Act, Key Points Act, Suppression of Communism Act and Internal Security Act. These were ways to protect 32 Battalion from becoming public knowledge and of justifying its existence based on national security.

United by '*Die Rooi Gevaar*' or communism, 32 Battalion comprised black Angolan soldiers, white SADF permanent force members and conscripted soldiers who gained a reputation for being ruthless in completing their missions and decimating their foes. Ragtag and even terrorist-like, '*Os Terriveis*' or '*The Terrible Ones*' as they were referred to by their opponents were responsible for the highest percentage of enemy casualties of any SADF unit during the entire 'Border War' (Viljoen 2014 in Heywood 2015). Therefore, 32 Battalion was one of the most controversial units in the SADF.

SA did not intend on incorporating the Buffalo Soldiers (as many knew 32 Battalion) into the SADF as a permanent unit. The soldiers were first used by the SADF in combination with the other three battle groups (Foxbat, Zulu and Alfa) in the first large scale cross border operations of the bush war to "ensure a political objective of assisting the establishment of a post-colonial Angolan regime favourably-disposed to the South African government" (Warwick 2012:355). However, Breytenbach took advantage of the fact that the FNLA was the dominant force in southern Angola and utilised the unit as a counter-insurgency force

⁴ John Edwards was "a British citizen, who joined the battalion after leaving the Rhodesian Army. He made his way via Lusaka to the United Kingdom, and in an interview with the *Guardian* newspaper, accused the unit of committing brutal atrocities against Angolan citizens" (Nortje 2003:54).

deployed on the south Angolan border where they primarily served as a buffer between the SADF-regular forces, and their communist enemies across the border. Nortje (2003) states that many exiled ANC members found refuge in Angola and came to hear about 32 Battalion through the MPLA, who experienced the ruthlessness of the unit in the 'Border War'.

The exiled ANC⁵ had a close relationship with the MPLA, and 32 Battalion soon started fighting both parties on Angolan soil. A report released by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) details an instance during which the ANC's armed wing, *Umkhonto We Sizwe* (MK), met with 32 Battalion during MK's attempts to infiltrate South Africa.

The document reports that in March 1988 four MK members in an attempt to make their way into South Africa had met members of the SADF, an encounter that resulted in the deaths of three MK members, and the arrest of another. Apparently, the SADF captured two of the MK members and asked them to squat after discovering that they were armed.

However, the MK members managed to escape, at which point the SADF opened fire on them, killing three, and arresting another. After the survivor had been interrogated, he confessed that his party consisted of two other MK members. The SADF pursued and opened fire on them, killing both these MK members (Truth and Reconciliation Recommendation, n.d. in Heywood 2015: 23). It is through interactions such as these that the ANC began developing a very grim view of "the mercenary army of Angolans" even before their relocation to South Africa.

By March 1989, SWA was on the road to independence, and consequently, 32 Battalion had to relocate from their 'home' of almost a decade to a new 'home'. They could not go back to the war-ravaged Angola they had left 12 years earlier (where they fought their own countrymen) nor could they stay in Namibia. The only solution was to relocate to South Africa, and thus, in May 1989 "11 passenger trains, one leaving every five days, would each ferry 400 people 3 000 km from Grootfontein to Vryburg, from where they were taken to Pomfret by bus. Three C130 aircraft would carry unmarried members from Omega to Kimberley, and 76 civilian trucks would each transport 30 tons of equipment to the new base...a fleet of private vehicles would carry the household goods of families to Pomfret" (Nortje 2003:274). This was after Commandant Robbie Hartslief, Captain Martin Geldenhuys and Foxtrot Company went to Pomfret in March 1989 to prepare the former asbestos mine to ensure acceptable living conditions for 32 Battalion soldiers and their dependents. By September of that year, houses were built and occupied by the soldiers and their families,

⁵ The ANC was banned by the South African government from 1960 due to the intensification of the anti-pass campaign and thus, forced to operate underground and in other African countries (South African History Online 2016).

three schools were established, and a church and sporting facilities were put in place while the streets were named after commanding officers and regimental sergeants in Pomfret, in the Western Transvaal (now North West).

During the 1990s 32 Battalion came to play a new role in South Africa, a role that would lead to its inevitable disbandment. From early 1990, SA faced increased violence and unrests, especially in townships. The year witnessed the “normalisation of the political process” in South Africa: the ANC, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) were unbanned; the right to political protests was reinstated, and former exiled members of the ‘external enemy’⁶ were returning to SA (Simpson, Mokwena and Segal 1992 in Robertson & Rycroft 1991). Yet conflict in the townships escalated.

It started between supporters of the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) because they could not agree on the most effective strategies to oppose and overthrow the apartheid government. Kynoch (2013:285) argues that “by the mid-1980s the IFP was in open conflict with ANC sympathizers in its home area of KZN (Kwazulu-Natal)” but it wanted to increase its support base beyond KZN through distributing and influencing its power to the Zulu-dominated hostels⁷ situated in and across the Rand. However, there were clashes because of the IFP’s “heavy-handed recruiting methods and anti-ANC campaigning” (Kynoch 2013: 285).

The Inkatha Youth Brigade leader, Themba Khoza, argued that “we have all identified apartheid as the cause of violence amongst the people, if this was not the case, I do not think violence would occur. What is presently happening is that the ANC is using its might to crush all forms of opposition to its views by fighting to become the sole representative of the people. If an organisation or individual does not want to follow the ANC’s line, it is then labelled as an enemy of the people and attacked.”

However, according to a statement issued by the ANC’s Department of Information and Publicity (1991) about the violence in the townships, “the African National Congress expresses its extreme concern at the increasing violence, both in Natal and on the Reef. Scores of people have died in circumstances of horrific violence. This escalating violence should sound warning bells to all South Africans” (ANC Department of Information and Publicity 1991). Innes (1990) argues that political violence had escalated since “at least 1987

⁶ The ANC, the PAC and the SACP were believed to be SA’s ‘external enemy’ and criminalised for the mere fact that they were believed to threaten the security of the state and of white power and privilege. Thus, the National Party declared ‘total onslaught’ and the members of each organisations were exiled and could only return in South Africa as from 1990.

⁷ These are defined as “large dormitory-like complexes that were built to house unskilled black, male migrants, primarily employed in the lowest-status urban occupations such as factory and foundry work...by the time the violence began the hostels were self-governing” (Kynoch 2013:284).

when 661 died to 1988 when 1 149 died to 1989 when 1 403 people died. In 1990...in the first six months alone, 1 591 people died as a result of political violence...followed by the deaths of 144 people in July of 1990, 709 in August, 520 in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging area alone, and another 369 people in September” (Innes 1990 in Simpson, Mokwena & Segal 1992 in Robertson & Rycroft 1992). Lieutenant J. A. van der Westhuizen, a security police researcher, disagreed with these statistics. According to van der Westhuizen, only 454 people died in political unrest in 1987, 652 in 1988 and 659 in 1989, but 2 403 died in the eleven months to 30 November 1990 (Van der Westhuizen 1991 in Simpson, Mokwena & Segal 1992 in Robertson & Rycroft 1991). Regardless of the difference between Innes and Van der Westhuizen’s statistics, it shows that the political unrest not only increased the death rate, but it necessitated an immediate solution.

In May 1990, the violence increased so dramatically that the police could not control it and thus SADF units were deployed to try to maintain order. 32 Battalion was one of the main units and was therefore deployed.

32 Battalion’s first township deployment to lessen violence was in Natal (today Kwazulu-Natal), specifically in Umlazi, Pietermaritzburg and around Durban because of extensive violent clashes between ANC and IFP supporters. The unit was successful in ending all unrests in Natal, but according to Breytenbach (2002), both ANC and IFP supporters thought that the unit had handled them in a brutal manner. Wilson (2001a:7) argues that the mere fact of involving 32 Battalion “lay the origins of the Third Force amongst professional counter-insurgency specialists with long experience of border wars, which as the years went by, they increasingly applied in South Africa itself”. Although 32 Battalion was successful in most of its deployments and they ended the violence in most townships by bringing and maintaining law and order, the result was not to their advantage.

Their actions intensified feelings of hatred towards them and attracted negative media attention, with reporters often referring to them as “notorious blood-thirsty killers” (Breytenbach, 2002:327).

Deacon Mathe, a former ANC commander, stated “32 Battalion came into the townships; they were attacking our people and destroying activist’s houses. People today view 32 Battalion as the outcasts because their activities were very vicious, and they constantly opened fire on innocent people” (The Incredible Story of Apartheid’s Black Shock Troops 2007). However, Viljoen (2014 in Heywood 2015:26) argued “sending 32-Battalion to the townships was the best thing the government could have done. 32 Battalion was extremely effective; they stopped a lot of the infighting because at that stage, the ANC and IFP were involved in heavy fighting. When 32 moved in, they stopped the war”. Breytenbach

(2002:335) added, “both the IFP and ANC were in a state of dismay to discover that 32-Battalion had no loyalties to either side and treated both tribes with the same level of brutality and force”. The last deployment and action of 32 Battalion was the Phola Park incident. The soldiers were deployed in Phola Park in April 1992 to try to control the violence. An incident occurred between the ANC and 32 Battalion on 8 April 1992, which resulted in two contested versions of the incident.

According to Nortje (2014), shots were fired directly towards the military vehicles from shacks in the township as the unit moved towards the fenced area, which caused the troops (who were trained and experienced to deal with these kinds of attacks) to disembark and return fire. He further recalled that the Angolan soldiers were not reluctant to come forward for internal investigations and admitted that they were in fact ‘heavy-handed, [that they had] kicked and slapped some residents but they had not killed any resident during the incident.

The day after the incident (9 April 1992), Sergeant Jan Hendrik Olivier (a detective) who visited the scene of the incident, concluded that a woman was shot in the leg, one resident was found dead, and many residents reported to have been assaulted (Nortje, 2014:1153).

The media and the ANC had different views of the incident. The SABC reported that “*on April 8th, 1992, over hundred residents of Phola Park, Thokoza, were severely beaten with rifle-butts by the members of the SADF 32 Battalion, in Thokoza, after an SADF member was shot and injured in the area. Two women were shot dead and at least four raped during the raid*” (SABC, 1993). It was also reported that Daniel Lucas Monyepao, an ANC supporter, “*was severely beaten with rifle butts by members of the SADF 32 Battalion in his shack in Phola Park, Thokoza, Tvl, on 8 April 1992. Mr Monyepao was one of more than 100 Phola Park residents, including women and teenagers, who were assaulted by members of the Battalion* (SABC, 1993).

The media showed images of dead bodies and wounded people as more reports concluded that 32 Battalion went to Phola Park and used live ammunition on innocent unarmed civilians. Several interviews were conducted where more than seventy ANC supporters and Phola Park residents reported to have suffered brutality at the hands of 32 Battalion (Nortje, 2014:115).

The African National Congress’s Department of Information and Publicity released a statement on 10 April 1992, according to which “*32 Battalion is notorious for their barbarity against Namibian and Angolan people and now they are bringing that barbarity here. What was 32 Battalion doing in Phola Park in the first place? It is precisely the deployment of units like this that reinforce our distrust of the security forces and the impression that such forces*

bear much of the responsibility for the ongoing violence" (African National Congress Department of Information and Publicity 1992).

After the Goldstone Commission found that 32 Battalion's presence in Phola Park was unjustified and their actions inconsistent with the peace, 32 Battalion was withdrawn from deployment. At the same time, the NP and the ANC, through the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA),⁸ were negotiating South Africa's political transition.

Therefore, it was not surprising that the ANC demanded the NP disband 32 Battalion because of the Phola Park incident. Pfister (2003) argues that the negotiations had reached such a fragile state that the ANC was threatening to opt out should their demands not be met.

During the negotiations, the ANC demanded that the unit is withdrawn from townships and sent to their base in Pomfret (Breytenbach 2002:337). As CODESA reached a critical point, as well as with international pressure and sanctions, the NP was at a disadvantage, which meant that 32 Battalion was officially disbanded in March 1993.

South Africa's political transition in 1994 when the ANC was democratically elected to power meant that the military would be reshaped and the SADF changed to become the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). Some members of 32 Battalion felt betrayed by the apartheid government and were left with feelings of uncertainty. The majority of the members had no other skills than being in the army and little to no education. The disbandment of 32 Battalion inevitably affected their livelihoods.

The ex-members of 32 Battalion were integrated into 2 SAI (2 South African Infantry Battalion) (Zeerust), 111 BN (Ermelo), 44 Para Battalion (Bloemfontein), Special Forces (Phalaborwa), Loathla Military Base (Postmasburg) and other units of the SANDF. These relocations came with challenges. For example, those who were sent to 7 South African Infantry Battalion found themselves approximately 1 000 km away from their families located in Pomfret while those in Phalaborwa had no accommodation (Nortje, 2003). However, in 1996 2 SAI was reactivated in Pomfret, which meant that the ex-combatants could stay closer to their families. Unfortunately, this was short lived because in 2000 2 SAI moved to Zeerust (about 315 km from Pomfret) resulting in many 32 Battalion soldiers handing in their resignations and opting for severance packages in order to stay in Pomfret.

Pomfret had 1 200 houses, three public swimming pools, seven churches, and tennis courts and sports grounds. Today Pomfret is almost unrecognisable. There is no electricity (cut off

⁸ Began on 21 December 1991 in Johannesburg under Chief Justice Michael Corbett with Petrus Shaborn and Ismail Mohamed as presiding judges. It comprised of various political, civil, religious and community organisations to chart the future for a new and democratic South Africa.

by the municipality in 2014), limited water, which comes only once a week, and no clinic or police station. The government, however, has tried to relocate the 32 Battalion veterans to Mafikeng and Zeerust, listing the asbestos from the mine in Pomfret as their major concern as it could negatively affect the residents' health.

However, McIntyre and Chris Hattingh (the Provincial leader of the Democratic Alliance) are of the view that the lack of services in Pomfret and the issue of relocation is due to their alignment with SADF through 32 Battalion before 1993. McIntyre (in Sosibo 2007) states that in the 1990s, the government had already proposed that the Pomfret residents relocate to Rustenburg and Zeerust. However, the residents approached Popo Molefe, then premier of North West, who agreed to let them stay in exchange for their support of the ANC.

The latest relocation dilemma occurred in 2008 when the Pomfret residents were intimidated using tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets to relocate to Mafikeng, which is approximately 550 km away. McIntyre (2008) writes that the ANC has called for the relocation of the Pomfret residents through forced removals.

Chris Hattingh views the 'forced removal' by the ANC as vindictive considering that the majority of the Pomfret residents are ex-combatants of 32 Battalion. The Angolan ex-combatants of 32 Battalion have been labelled as "traitors" by Angolans (Harmse & Dunstan 2017), and in South Africa they are viewed as "battle-hardened, trained killers" whose "activities were very vicious, and they constantly opened fire on innocent people". They are viewed as 'puppets' used by the SADF to protect the apartheid regime. In contrast, former SADF officials such as Breytenbach (2002) and Nortje (2003) describe the ex-members as loyal and committed soldiers. However, both of these perspectives do not address the reasons as to why "approximately 3 000 of the original 5 000 inhabitants" insist on remaining in Pomfret especially after "much of the town was ravaged by looters after the local police station was shuttered in 2005 or torn down by police officers deployed to Pomfret during various phases of relocation that took place over the course 2008, when scores of families, ...were moved to RDP houses in Mahikeng" (TimesLive, 2018).

In *Askari: A Story of Collaboration and Betrayal in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle*, Jacob Dlamini (2014) argues that in the South African conflict, black collaborators were faced with a terrible dilemma in that they had to either betray their comrades or be killed themselves (or risk having their families harmed). He argues that there were traitors, and collaborators (or double agents) since the earliest clashes between black South Africans and European settlers. In his book, Dlamini examines the motivations of those who collaborated with the apartheid regime using the case of Glory Sedibe, known as 'Comrade September', by his fellow MK fighters. He was abducted from Swaziland in 1986 by the apartheid security police

and brought to South Africa. He was interrogated, tortured and as such 'turned' and through this process the SADF managed to get information about the whereabouts of his comrades enabling them to go after them and kill them. September changed from a resister to a collaborator, insurgent to counter-insurgent, revolutionary to counter-revolutionary and from hero to traitor to his former comrades. Dlamini argues that we need to think beyond the black and white conflict of South Africa; and look at the social, moral and political conditions in which apartheid collaborators such as Comrade September worked and lived. However, it is in *Native Nostalgia* published in 2009 that Jacob Dlamini addresses the different narrations of black identity during apartheid by looking at his childhood within the context of nostalgia. Moreover, he relies on Svetlana Boym's 'reflective nostalgia' to explain the reasons as to why he remembers his childhood with attachment and longing regardless of apartheid's crimes against black people. "For Dlamini, the radio dramas, the sense of community, the love which transformed township matchbox houses into homes, the social order manifested in class distinctions and rituals of politeness, and even the residents' use of Afrikaans...transformed his community from a 'zone' of deprivation' to home. Coullie succinctly summarises *Native Nostalgia* as a personal response to past and present South Africa, to hegemonic versions of the past and to contemporary state-sponsored endeavours to shape communal memory" (Kahimbaara, 2016:7). Therefore, despite the difficulties that a community or group of people might be facing within a community, they are likely to be attached as a result of memory and sense of belonging within the place.

For Michelle Moyd (2014), who analysed the role of the *askari* in the former German East Africa (today Tanzania), the *askari*⁹ engaged in brutal military activities in exchange for wages that would earn them respect within their *askari* villages, which were often located outside of the actual *maboma* (military and administrative stations). Their actions also enabled them to provide for their families while validating their masculinity through their loyalty to the German colonial regime.

Furthermore, Moyd shows that the *askari* expected to be treated with respect and to be granted a certain degree of esteem in their communities. Consequently, they obtained power and autonomy for themselves and their families.

⁹ Michelle Moyd (2014) argued that an *askari* can be defined as a 'soldier' or 'police' in Kiswahili, Arabic, Turkish and other languages but colonial powers particularly in the eastern, central and southern Africa used the word to refer to African soldiers who fought in their (colonial) armies in Africa. In South Africa, the term *askari* is used to refer to a former loyal member of the ANC who changed sides and joined the apartheid government's police force as portrayed in Jacob Dlamini's *Askari: A Story of Collaboration and Betrayal in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (2014).

In return for their ruthless service as soldiers and as a constabulary force, assisting in the day-to-day policing and administration of the colony (German colonial army/*Schutztruppe*),¹⁰ they profited from these military actions and validated their masculinity by capturing women and children. These salaried services gave them access to the cash economy and the ability to engage in conspicuous consumption and patronage. Although being an *askari* was not an ideal situation, it afforded them wealth and status. Even so, family life was important to the askari as they allowed their wives to escort them on caravans. Moreover, the askari would engage in their Tanzanian traditional dance. She further argues that because the uniforms of the askari symbolised prestige or wealth in the community, it enticed people to want to belong to the askari communities, and this was possible through employment or membership. “By becoming connected to askari households, individuals who otherwise would have been without kin or community found a sort of domestic security, thereby decreasing their socioeconomic vulnerability during times when being without kin could have dire consequences” (Moyd, 2014:20). She further states: “Boma economies centred on providing goods and services especially to their soldiers... those who lived at or near the stations and to those passing through surrounding areas” and therefore it is not surprising that traders used this to their favour and set up businesses around these stations. Ultimately because of this, the soldiers, their families and those who were aligned to the soldiers would be reluctant to leave because of the benefits.

In this dissertation, I build on both Jacob Dlamini’s and Moyd’s ideas by looking at the socio-economic situations of the Angolan ex-combatants in Angola as a way of understanding the reasons for joining 32 Battalion through the lenses of displacement (migration). More importantly, however, I investigate their attachment and sense of belonging in Pomfret in the context of nostalgia, community and memory.

I wanted to ‘experience’ and observe the situations in which the participants found themselves in Pomfret, and therefore used interviewing as the primary research method. It allowed me to spend time with the participants and to engage with them in their own environment using participant observation and face-to-face interviews.

¹⁰ Michelle Moyd’s *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (2014) analyses the social lives and aspirations of the soldiers who were recruited by the German East African colonial army. In the book, she argues that because the *askari* are either glorified by the Germans for their loyalty or criticized by the Tanzanians for the atrocities committed during the development of the colonial state between 1890 and 1918, they have been misrepresented as historical agents. Therefore, she analyses them through their everyday roles in the household, community and military to portray the significant roles they have played in maintaining colonialism in German East Africa whilst becoming respectable men in their local contexts.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

As an Angolan, I found it difficult to grasp the fact that I did not know about the existence of 32 Battalion until 2014. My former supervisor advised me to use my first language (Portuguese) to my advantage and suggested 32 Battalion as a topic of study. The more I read about 32 Battalion, the more interested I became, wanting to know more about their story. I believe that such stories should not only be told but also be understood. There are a number of books regarding 32 Battalion's historical background and activities, mostly written by former SADF officials about their experiences with 32 Battalion (Breytenbach 2002; Nortje 2003; Scheepers 2012). Breytenbach was the founding commander of the unit, with Nortje and Scheepers being sergeant major and signalling officer, respectively.

Angela McIntyre took a more academic approach than the ex-soldiers mentioned above. As part of the University of the Witwatersrand's Missing Voices Project, she conducted 92 interviews with ex-members of 32 Battalion in 2006 and 2007. These constitute important conversations about the unit's secrecy and the controversies that surround it. 32 Battalion has piqued other academic interest too. Christian Claasen submitted a Masters dissertation to the University of Cape Town in 2016, which made use of concepts such as memory, myth, senses of place, belonging and identity to examine two divergent narratives and posit that the respondents' reflections on the FNLA are ultimately tied to their present identities as forgotten and betrayed war veterans. Julia Heywood (a Masters student in Film and Television at the University of Witwatersrand) analysed the politics of memory, commemoration and representation in the new SA with a focus on 32 Battalion.

However, the question of what motivated the FNLA soldiers to form part of the SADF as well as their reasons for insisting on living in the crumbling town of Pomfret remains largely unexamined.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To unpack the extent of the sense of belonging amongst the Pomfret community through the lenses of memory and nostalgia
- To unpack the different factors that motivated the ex-combatants to join 32 Battalion.
- To examine the roles of two governments (led by the NP and ANC respectively) in the ex-combatants' livelihoods.
- To determine the reasons for the former combatants' attachment to Pomfret.
- To investigate whether the package plan (money, housing, etc.) offered to the soldiers were sufficient and how it has contributed to their current situation.

1.3.1 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

The existing research surrounding ex-combatants in most African countries, such as Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique and Angola, has either focused on the role of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programmes (DDR) or on the conditions the ex-combatants find themselves in as well as their survival strategies post the war. Furthermore, the former Angolan combatants of 32 Battalion have been labelled traitors or trained killers by many scholars without analysing the conditions that motivated them to join 32 Battalion. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the available research by investigating their motivations for joining 32 Battalion and why, despite deteriorating conditions (and government's relocation proposal), the former 32 Battalion members insist on living in Pomfret. This study will further contribute to the existing literature on ex-combatants' lives post 1993 by focussing particularly on the concepts of nostalgia, home, memory and sense of belonging as a way of understanding their attachment to the deserted Pomfret in relation to the migration literature and their displacement narrations.

1.4. METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on how Angolan ex-combatants of 32 Battalion have reconstructed their lives since the disbandment of the unit in 1993. In addition, it aims to discover the reasons the residents are against the idea of relocation from Pomfret, North West and explores how the South African government have shaped their lives through lack of service delivery. Qualitative research is a social science research orientation that considers “reality to be subjective, constructed, multiple and diverse” (Sarantakos 2005:41) and it is often conducted in the natural setting of the participants. A researcher can employ various qualitative research methods (interviews, participant observation, document study and secondary analysis) to allow him/her to explore, explain and discover social processes from the perspective of the participants (Sarantakos 2005). In this study, I made use of semi-structured interviews and participant observation in order to achieve my objectives.

The semi-structured in-depth interview is often referred to as a “conversation with a purpose”, in that it allows the researcher the opportunity to explore and explain social processes from the perspectives of the participants (Sarantakos 2005:45). Furthermore, it allows the researcher the opportunity to understand the experiences of the participants as well as the meanings that they attach to their experiences. In my study, through interviewing the ex-combatants in their own environment and ‘home’ of more than 20 years (Pomfret), I was able to develop an understanding of the circumstances in which they find themselves. The interviews are focused and engaging as both the researcher and participant explore the problem or issue at hand. As I conducted the interviews, I was interested in the ex-combatants’ responses to my questions.

I interviewed ten participants in total. Out of the ten, eight were males and former combatants of 32 Battalion. The other two participants were females (one was a widow of, and the other was still married to an ex-combatant). All interviews were conducted in Portuguese, except one, as the interviewee could not speak Portuguese, only Nganguela, and thus, my contact person acted as the translator. The interviewed Angolan residents are not fluent in English or Tswana. Through the interviews, the ex-combatants were able to describe their experiences during the war in Angola, their move to Namibia, their experiences in Namibia, how they ended up in Pomfret, as well as their experiences in Pomfret, focussing specifically on their social conditions, the issue of employment and why they are intent on staying in Pomfret. Before I left Pretoria, I prepared some questions to begin and guide the conversations. These questions were in English and Portuguese

because I had assumed that some of the participants would be more comfortable in English than in Portuguese. When I conducted the interviews, I realised the opposite to be true: nine of the ten participants spoke Portuguese.

The questions focused on their demographics, how they ended up joining 32 Battalion, their experiences as troops in the unit, their experiences in Namibia, how they ended up in Pomfret and their experiences in Pomfret, including the issue of employment and their reasons for choosing to remain in Pomfret. I realised that I did not need my prepared questions, because as the participants spoke, I was able to intervene if their responses were insufficient, incomplete or lacked clarity or even request evidence or examples.

For example, during an interview, one participant went to fetch his old MPLA card to prove that he was a former MPLA troop before he joined the FNLA and showed me his identification document (ID) so that I could be sure of his age. Moreover, all eight men either showed me pictures of themselves in their 32 Battalion uniform or their medals or their certificates. Some spoke with much pride of their medals or certificates while others did not see the value of the medals, certificates or uniforms.

During the interviews, it was important that I was able to ask follow up questions because as I conversed with the participants I realised that they use certain words that I did not understand even though they were in Portuguese. For example, one of the participants used the expression “*me deu tampa*”. In Portuguese, *tampa* literally refers to a lid such as a lid of a bottle or pot but amongst themselves “*me deu tampa*” refers to being rejected. He was referring to the fact that even though he tried to apply for jobs after his time with 32 Battalion, he was rejected. I also came across concepts such as *chupeta* and *mali*. *Chupeta* literally refers to a baby dummy, but I found out that in Pomfret, they use the term *chupeta* to refer to alcohol. Moreover, the term *mal* means bad, but in Pomfret the word *mali* is used to emphasize that someone or something has a lot of a particular quality or that the description one is about to give is particularly accurate. Throughout the interviews, my aim was to understand their responses to questions in the broader context of the interviews as a whole, and therefore I made sure that I understood the words and expressions that were not familiar to me. Overall, I allowed the participants to control the conversations.

One of the challenges of this research method “has to do with achieving and maintaining a balance between flexibility and consistency in data collection. Flexibility is essential for discovery and for eliciting the participant’s story... some consistency is also essential in the type of questions asked, the depth and detail and the amount of exploration versus confirmation” (Sarantakos 2005:46). To deal with this challenge, I made sure that during all interviews, there was a balance between the individual stories and ensuring that I gather

sufficient information for consistency and comparison. Furthermore, this research method is very time-consuming. The individual interviews took between two to two and a half hours each. Moreover, the small sample (only ten participants in this study) does not allow one to produce generalisation.

I also used participant observation since I was already in Pomfret, and the participants were willing to include me in their daily lives and natural experiences. Participant observation “implies that data cannot really be reduced to figures” (Strydom in De Vos et al. 2005:274). However, the researcher is able to watch and partake in human activities as they take place within the chosen physical setting. It is actually through participant observation that I was able to get know Pomfret better. The first day on site, we just drove around Pomfret, and I was shown its features: the churches, the cemetery, the school, the crèche (which closed), the community hall and the old asbestos mine. I was an ‘outsider’ learning what life is like for the ‘insiders’. I took notes where possible, which was very valuable because it was “useful for gaining an understanding of the physical, social, cultural and economic contexts in which study participants live; the relationship among and between people, contexts, ideas, norms and events; people’s behaviors and activities” (Mack et al. 2005:14). Although it has been criticized because it is time-consuming and it is difficult to document the data (it is challenging to write down everything that one observes and deems important due to finding a balance between participating and observing), it is through participant observation that I was able to gain first-hand experience of the daily living experiences of the former combatants.

In order to supplement both the semi-structured interviews and participant observation, I have also made use of the archival research method, which involves “the study of historical documents...documents created at some point in the... past, providing us access that we do not otherwise have to the organizations, individuals and events” (Ventresca & Mohr 2001:2). Zald (1993 in Ventresca & Mohr 2001:4) argues that “archival work provides a basis for defining key questions, establishes a base of evidence and supports debate about familiar forms and mechanisms”. The archival work I used was in order to complement the data I had collected in Pomfret. The archival research method may also be used by scholars “engaged in non-historical investigations of documents and texts produced by and about contemporary organizations” (Ventresca & Mohr 2001:2). In my study, my supervisor pointed me to the *Missing Voices Project*, an archival oral history project that had been undertaken by the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of Witwatersrand (Wits). The project was conducted between 2004 and 2012 and documents personal experiences, perceptions and stories from former members of Self-Defence Units in Thokoza and Katlehong on the East

Rand and members of the South African Defence Force, namely ex-32 Battalion, ex-31 Battalion and Koevoet.

I accessed these sources at the William Cullen Library at Wits, focussing on interviews with ex-32 Battalion members. I could also make use of audio recordings of the interviews that had not yet been transcribed, because I am fluent in Portuguese. All interviews dealt with the historical background of 32 Battalion as well as some of the ex-combatants' experiences in Namibia and their relocation from Namibia to South Africa. However, I encountered some challenges whilst using the archives. The interviews that were already transcribed were incomplete (the transcriber wrote in brackets that due to background noise, some parts of the interviews were inaudible thus some information was omitted) and it confused me as I had to try guess what the interviewee was saying. In addition, because it was already transcribed, I could not follow up or clarify with the interviewees. I also struggled to make sense of the recordings due to the noise in the background. Because I did not know whether the names on the transcribed material were pseudonyms or not, I have given them pseudonyms to ensure that their identity is protected.

1.4.2 SELECTING A STUDY SITE

I purposefully selected Pomfret as the study site as it is home to the 32 Battalion combatants and their families who settled in this former asbestos mining town after its conversion to a military base in 1989 when they fled Caprivi just before Namibia's independence. Pomfret is located in the Ganyesa District of the North-West Province of South Africa and on the edge of the Kalahari Desert, a few kilometres from the Botswana-South Africa border. It is approximately 567 km from the eastern part of Pretoria and about 180 km north of Vryburg. Pomfret is the administrative centre of Molopo Local Municipality. Those who participated in the study remember Pomfret as well maintained with good infrastructure with services such as electricity, water, sanitation (flushing toilets), a post office, a hospital, shops and a school. The town was divided into two parts, white officers and their families lived in Salvador in houses on large stands with a separate pre-school for their children, tarred roads, street lights and recreational facilities. Black troops were housed in smaller brick houses on the other side of the town with a separate school, called *Esperança* (Hope).

After the unit disbanded in 1993 and the army base moved to Zeerust, the condition of the town slowly started to deteriorate. In the 1990s, the government had already proposed that the Pomfret residents relocate to Rustenburg and Zeerust, but the residents approached Popo Molefe, then premier of North West, who agreed to let them stay in exchange for their support of the ANC. Since then, the town has been neglected and the situation became

worse after it was reported that nine men from Pomfret were part of the mercenary group involved in the plot to unseat the government of Equatorial Guinea in 2004 (Sosibo 2007).

In 2008, the residents of Pomfret were faced with possible relocation due to the asbestos mine, which had a negative effect on their health. It was also a way to re-integrate them into different communities, such as Mafikeng, which is approximately 250 km from Pomfret. However, most of the residents refused to be relocated. My interviews revealed the lack of information (the government has not engaged with the Pomfret residents on the relocation process and plan) and fear of persecution as reasons for their refusal to relocate. Furthermore, the bonds they have managed to form with one another in this community are strong and one can therefore understand their unwillingness to relocate.

Their refusal to relocate has led to the suspension of services such as the hospital, post office and police station, with some buildings being destroyed by the police. Pomfret has become a 'ghost town' with minimal infrastructure and inadequate maintenance. Those who have chosen to remain there have lodged court cases questioning the legality of their removal and seek to clarify the issues of the rightful owner of the land. This process is still ongoing.

Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain information from participants regarding their experiences in Pomfret since 1993. This interview method allowed for one-on-one interaction between the participants and the researcher. I usually started an interview by introducing myself and explaining the objective of the study. The interview continued with questions on the issue of the promises that were made to them by the SADF and the issue of housing. I also asked follow-up questions that would ultimately bring us to new conversations regarding their 32 Battalion uniforms and certificates. The participants willingly answered questions, and some even spoke *Umbundu* with me (my mother-tongue). I tried to divide the questions of the interview into sections. The first section started with a demographic profile of the participants and how they ended up in Pomfret. The second focussed on how their lives have changed since the disbandment of the unit in 1993 in terms of work, family, financial assistance, and life as civilians as well as the development of their community in Pomfret. The third section focused on the reasons why they do not want to relocate from Pomfret to gain access to better service delivery.

1.4.3 SELECTING PARTICIPANTS AND NEGOTIATING ACCESS

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants and the use of this sampling allowed me to use only participants that would be useful in answering the research questions. The fact that all the participants were in Pomfret simplified the interview process as we could easily walk to the respective houses of the participants once we were in Pomfret.

Our contact person had already spoken to potential participants prior to our arrival in Pomfret. Furthermore, the fact that they knew Nene¹¹ made most people willing to participate although some blatantly (and understandably) refused to be interviewed. At the start of the interview process, some participants were reluctant to provide details about their army days during the apartheid era and were not willing to participate due to its sensitivity. The contact person had explained that I was interested in their life during combat and no one was willingly to participate because they thought it was confidential and they could no longer remember full details. However, once I explained that my research would be based on their livelihoods post 1993 and the motives behind them joining the 32 Battalion unit of the SADF, they become more inclined to participate.

After I assured them that I was not interested in their combat activities, they were more willing to participate. I further explained that I was a registered student at the University of Pretoria (I had my student card in case they doubted it). I explained that I was not affiliated to any other institution besides the University of Pretoria and fortunately, the fact that I was from Angola and spoke the same language, made them more comfortable and worked to my advantage.

In total, I interviewed eight former combatants of 32 Battalion and two women. The participants ranged in age from late 50s to early 80s. Four of the participants are of *Ngangela*¹² ethnicity, two are *Úmbúndú*¹³, two are *Chokwe*¹⁴, and one is *Mumuhuila*¹⁵. Two of the participants were born in the Menongue province, two were born in the Bié province

¹¹ Nene is a 26-year-old young man who lived in Pomfret before with his parents and volunteered to escort me during my research. I met him through mutual friends.

¹² *Nganguela* (can also be spelled as *Ganguela*) is spoken by a group of Bantu people whose dialects include Luchazi, Nyemba and Mbwela.

¹³ *Úmbúndú* or *South Mbundu* is the most spoken Bantu language by the *Ovimbundu* people who originate from the central highlands and the western coastal region.

¹⁴ Spelled either *Chokwe*, *Ciokwe* or *Cokwe* refers to either the language or ethnic group called *Bajokwe*, or *Badjok*.

¹⁵ Also known as *Mwila* or *Mwela* people are semi-nomadic ethnic group living in southern Angola, in the province of Huila.

and the others were born in the provinces of Cuanza Sul, Lubango, Cuanza Norte, Huambo and Cuando Cubango respectively.

Of all participants, only three were between the ages of 16 to 18 when they joined the FNLA as troops, the others were in their mid-20s, and one joined at the age of 49. Most of the participants are married except for one widower and one widow. One of the participants could only speak *Ngangela* and as such, our contact person had to assist in interpreting.

One of the dependents of a participant asked me how her father would benefit from participating in the study. I assured her that there were no financial benefits, but that his participation will help bring the plight of the residents of Pomfret to light. She replied that it is not fair for him not to be paid for his participation because he suffered. I sympathised with her due to the circumstances surrounding the Pomfret community. However, no payments were made.

I was warmly received and many apologised for not having anything to offer (in Angola whenever someone comes to visit, you are expected to offer something to drink or eat such as cookies or cake). One of the participants instructed his wife to give us at least a cold drink, which we gladly received so that they did not take offence.

The first interview I conducted with the participants lasted for about two hours each. The interviews were conducted individually. During the second interview the participants were much more comfortable with me and they gave much more details about their current situation, they spoke mostly about their family members and those who have passed away, as well as how moving out of Pomfret was not an option.

Even though there were some challenges in the field and Pomfret is far from Pretoria and caused financial constraints on me, I learnt so much from each participant. Furthermore, I was welcomed, particularly due to the fact that I was also from Angola and I was invited to visit whenever I had the chance.

1.4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The data I collected from the interviews were organised according to the different sections of my prepared questions, recurring themes and the shared experiences of the ex-combatants of 32 Battalion. From the interviews, I was able to identify the different issues that the participants raised and their personal reasons for not wanting to relocate elsewhere in South Africa. During the interviews, I used my phone's audio-recorder while simultaneously taking notes and observing the participants.

Four of the participants did not want to be recorded, and thus, I had to rely solely on note-taking. I transcribed the recorded interviews soon after the interviews were conducted and typed up the handwritten notes. I did most of this work at the guesthouse in Tosca where I stayed during fieldwork.

The fact that I required the participants to supply me with personal information about their lives meant that I was entering their private spaces and had an obligation as a researcher to respect their rights. Furthermore, I had to ensure that participants had full knowledge of the objectives of the study and how the collected data would be used. I also had a psychologist and social worker on standby should any of the participants have required debriefing. I obtained a letter from 32 Battalion Veterans Association (Appendix A) stipulating that they are aware of and that they will assist me in my research if needed. In addition, I was honest with the participants about the objective of the study and they signed consent forms (Appendix B), which stipulated that they were willingly participating in the study. I am just including the sample (English and Portuguese version) and not the signed consent forms by the participants in order to protect their identities however the signed consent forms will be available at the Department (only four participants agreed to sign the consent forms, the others were explained what the consent letter says but did not want to sign although they willingly participated in the studies). The consent form further stated that Portuguese will be the language of communication and that they could withdraw from the study at any given moment should they feel uncomfortable to proceed and that they could refuse to answer any questions.

Although some did share their names with me and showed me their ID documents (because they could not remember their year of birth), I ensured them that I would use pseudonyms. I chose pseudonyms carefully, taking into consideration that there is a negative perception about these ex-combatants in South Africa since they are perceived as traitors because they 'fought for the apartheid government'. I reassured them that they would not be recognisable

in the final report. While most of the participants signed consent forms, some only verbally consented to the study, as they were suspicious of signing any paper or recording.

They feared signing documents (even though it was written in Portuguese) that could be used to identify them. I did not try to force the participants who were reluctant to answer certain questions, and I emphasized the fact that they could pull out at any time.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

“It is clear that wars do not end with the cessation of hostilities; they have an afterlife... which continues to affect the veterans and society more generally for a long time after the shooting is over” (Baines 2014:1).

This chapter looks at the existing literature surrounding 32 Battalion while taking into consideration the socio-economic conditions of the Angolans during the time of Portuguese colonialism and after the proclamation of Angola’s independence in 1975. Firstly, it looks at conditions during Portuguese rule in order to understand Angolans’ resentment towards their colonial rulers and their determination to fight for independence. Secondly, it analyses living conditions in Angola after independence in 1975 and ultimately the circumstances that ‘pushed’ some Angolans to migrate locally or internationally. Thirdly, it looks at the challenges the migrants experienced in foreign countries, and specifically the challenges of the former Angolan ex-combatants in Namibia before they joined 32 Battalion. The aim is to highlight the factors that led them to join 32 Battalion and how their lives changed thereafter: how they became refugees; lived in refugee camps in Namibia; found themselves recruited by Jan Breytenbach to assist UNITA in the fight against SWAPO; and how, when Namibia was on the road to independence, 32 Battalion combatants and their families were moved to Pomfret, North West (SA) by the SADF.

In South Africa, the SADF deployed 32 Battalion soldiers for peacekeeping between 1991 and 1992. However, that backfired when they were involved in the Phola Park and accused of committing atrocities against civilians, which ultimately led to the disbandment of the unit in 1993. When the ANC came to power in 1994, some ex-combatants of 32 Battalion were incorporated into the new SANDF (the former SADF) and sent to various military bases; while the others opted for severance pay and remained in Pomfret. However, when 2 SAI moved to Pomfret in 1994, most of those who were working in places like Phalaborwa saw it as an opportunity to go back to Pomfret to work under 2 SAI and be closer to their families. This situation was short-lived as 2 SAI moved to Zeerust in 1993 (Engelbrecht 2010) as a result of the asbestos contamination and this had a negative impact on the ex-combatants’ livelihoods and environment.

Several socio-economic factors played a significant role in these Angolans’ decision to join 32 Battalion and to fight their own countrymen and their eventual immigration to South Africa. But several factors also tie them to Pomfret. I therefore also look at relevant migration

literature, specifically at the notions of home and community, to understand the reasons why my informants insist on staying in Pomfret regardless of its deteriorating conditions.

Lastly, I discuss the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) as it will be used as the theoretical framework to make sense of collected data.

2.2 LIFE UNDER THE PORTUGUESE: ANTECEDENTS TO THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Portuguese explorers made their way down the west coast of Africa during the mid to late fifteenth century, and Diego Cão arrived in the Kingdom of Congo in 1482. Hugh Thomas (2015) argues that the Portuguese were searching for gold along the African coastline. When they found little, they looked instead for commodities such as wrought iron, ivory, tortoiseshell, pepper, and textiles (Davidson 1980). The arrival of the Portuguese stimulated the slave trade. Although the institution was practised in West Central Africa prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, Davidson (1972:81) argues that slavery in the kingdoms had been driven by the need to bolster population and armies, and increasing their authority and influence. Under the Portuguese, by contrast, slavery was motivated by commercial gain.

By the sixteenth century, there was a significant demand for cheap labour in the Portuguese plantations across the Portuguese empire, and slaves began to be a very profitable commodity. The traders were acting as intermediaries between the African chiefs and kings from whom they sourced the slaves, particularly in the coastal areas, such as Luanda and Benguela, which became slave-trading hubs (Birmingham 2015). To capture slaves (often referred as '*pecas*' meaning pieces), the colonialists would either make use of '*pombeiros*' (agents), who would roam through the interior of the country on established routes along the river or would exchange slaves with local chiefs for cloth and/or wine (Collelo 1991). The Portuguese further manipulated historical animosities between different ethnolinguistic groups (*Kimbundu, Umbundu, Lunda-Chokwe* and *Nganguela*) to motivate groups to plunder each other's villages and sell each other into slavery in exchange for food and liquor.¹⁶

Paul Lovejoy (1983) argues that African slavery started as a marginal, kinship-based system of servitude that became a mode of production through three periods. The first period is between 1350 and 1600 and was characterised by limited outside kinship-based slavery. The second period, between 1600 and 1800, introduced new enslavement methods and

¹⁶ But according to Davidson, it was more than that as "African chiefs found that the sale of their fellow men was indispensable to any contact or commerce with Europe Trapped in this unforeseen and fatal circumstance, pushed by their desire for European goods (and firearms often became essential to chiefly survival), or blackmailed by the fear that what one or two might refuse their rivals would consent to give, the rulers of coastal Africa surrendered to the slave trade" (1980:104).

commercial systems due to the growth in trade along the Atlantic coast, which consequently encouraged an increase in the slave trade and the rise of warlords.

However, after 1800 (the third period), the reduction of external trade led to an increase in domestic slavery and opened up wider areas of enslavement. Thus, Lovejoy concluded that plantation agriculture created a slave mode of production, which transformed the African continent. "Angola may have been the source of as many as 2 million slaves for the New World. More than half of these went to Brazil, nearly a third to the Caribbean, and from 10 to 15 percent to the Río de la Plata area on the south eastern coast of South America. Considering the number of slaves that actually arrived, and taking into account those who died crossing the Atlantic or during transport from the interior to the coast for shipping, the Angola area may have lost as many as 4 million people as a result of the slave trade" (Collelo, 1991).

After the abolishment of the slave trade in 1836, Angolans had to endure forced labour from the early 1900s. The Portuguese used intimidation and violence to force the Angolans to partake in different colonial projects. People were forced to work in the plantations for very little and inconsistent remunerations. In addition, workers would be physically abused and sometimes beaten to death - to the extent that journalists described it as an "economy of terror" (Birmingham 2015:5). The forced labour imprisoned people. The Portuguese would conscript young men to work on the plantations and other projects. Thereafter, they would sign contracts which would bond them for a duration of two to five years and were in most cases renewed after expiring and thus very few of these people ever returned to their respective inland villages (Birmingham 2015).

Through the British, the Portuguese sent some Angolans to South Africa to work on the gold and diamond mines in the Transvaal or in the Cape Colony and they became part of the Southern Africa migrant labour system. Up "until the 1960s Angolan people were coerced into traveling to South Africa to work in the mines there" (Burroughs 2011:103). In addition to forced labour and the use of 'cheap African labour', there was also the matter of the Native Statute in Angola. Implemented in 1926, the Statute ensured separation between the Europeans and the African population as the Angolans became categorised as either citizens or natives. Those considered native had to pay tax, partake in forced labour and always had to carry a passbook, whereas citizens had economic and social benefits (Birmingham 2015). The year 1954 introduced the beginning of the boom in the worldwide demand for coffee and this resulted in Angola producing 200 000 tons of coffee in the year 1975 (Birmingham 2015:68). This was produced on farms owned by white settlers, and meant that there was a need for more workers who were brought in from south-central

Angola, where the Ovimbundu people lived. This movement of people caused problems for the Bakongo people who lost their lands to the newcomers while the southern Ovimbundu were forced into labour and moved away from their families (Martin 2011:8).

We must not forget that from the moment the Portuguese settlers arrived in Angola, they seized land from local rural farmers and communities, a practice that was legalised in 1907 when fixed zones were established to be used exclusively by Africans. The Europeans took over the plateau areas in rural areas while the Africans were forced to move to the hot and humid areas, which the whites were reluctant to occupy. By the 1950s, Portuguese settlers had appropriated most of the agricultural land. The Portuguese colony had complete control over the economy, civil service, and politics and determined the living conditions of the African majority (Bender 1978).

By the late 1950s, the Angolan population was outraged by the brutality of Portuguese colonial power and this led to the establishment of anti-colonialism movements. The Angolan Communist Party (PCA), the Party of the United Struggle for Africans in Angola (PLUA) and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) were formed in December 1956. Thereafter, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) was formed in 1957 and 1966 respectively. During the early 1960s, Angolans started launching anticolonial attacks. The first of these was in January 1961 when members of a Christian sect known as 'Maria' began an economic sabotage campaign in north-central Angola. They started by disrupting farming activities on Portuguese-owned plantations by refusing to plant seeds or help cut local roads, or build river crossings, and killed cattle and stole supplies from stores and Catholic missions. The Portuguese retaliated by deploying air and ground forces as the insurrection spread, and it ended two months later with 7 000 Africans killed after a violent counterinsurgency from the Portuguese (Weigert 2011).

However, it is actually the Luanda uprising, which took place on the 4 February 1961, which started Angola's war of independence. Hundreds of poorly armed Angolan insurgents attacked a prison, a radio station and army barracks in Luanda. Portuguese military personnel retaliated by killing approximately 3 000 Angolans (Weigert: 2011). By the end of 1961, the Portuguese had gained control of the entire territory, but the death toll had reached nearly 2 000 Europeans and 50 000 Africans. During this time, one-tenth of the African population fled across the northern border to Zaire (today the DRC) because of the intense violent war between the Portuguese and the Angolan nationalists (Bender 1978:158). The Portuguese response to these attacks was a combination of violence and reform. The attacks of the nationalist forces were successful due to their element of surprise

because it “caught the small and inexperienced Portuguese army unprepared and unable to maintain control over a territory fourteen times larger than the metropole” (Bender 1978:158).¹⁷ While the Portuguese army was supplementing its numbers from Lisbon, the Portuguese settlers created vigilante groups that killed Africans in various parts of Angola. Therefore, “the civilian violence, numerous political arrests and widespread napalm bombing succeeded in driving most of the nationalist forces out of the colony within months” (Bender 1978:158).

By the end of 1961, the high death toll (about 50 000 Africans and 2 000 Europeans) forced the Portuguese to change their strategy by focussing on reforms with the hope of showing the Africans that they would benefit more by staying with Portugal than supporting the nationalist forces. Although it was possible for the Portuguese to implement the reforms because the guerrilla activities were restricted to border attacks, masterminded from sanctuaries in neighbouring countries, and there was limited contact between guerrilla fighters and African civilians, especially in the enclave of Cabinda and in the northern coffee districts, the Portuguese still failed because they focused more on propaganda than implementing these reforms. By 1966, the nationalists started mobilizing the peasants in the east. It was not difficult to gain the peasants’ support and it was immediately after this that the Portuguese concluded that the civilians had to be isolated from the guerrilla forces and started implementing a campaign to regroup Africans into strategic hamlets in eastern Angola in late 1967 (Bender 1978).

According to Bender (1978), there were two types of resettlement or regroupment: *aldeamento* or ‘strategic resettlement’ and *reordenamento* or ‘rural resettlement’. While the former applied mostly to those located in eastern and northwest Angola and was aimed at providing local defence against attacks from nationalist forces and preventing infiltration as well as mobilisation amongst non-combatant peasants; the latter happened in most parts of Angola but outside the fighting zones and it was aimed at promoting social and economic development. Strategic resettlement comprised of large villages organised by the military and was surrounded by barbed wire, in both cases the villages were close to the roads, which were guarded by the military. Bender analysed the impact of these resettlements within geographical classification: north, east, central and south.¹⁸ These regions

¹⁷ At the beginning of 1961, the Portuguese army consisted of about 8 000 men (2 000 to 3 000 were Europeans and 5 000 Africans) but expanded to approximately 50 000 by the end of 1961 (Bender 1978).

¹⁸ The northern region included districts of Zaire, Uige, and northern part of Malange and Cuanza-Norte. The eastern region included Moxico, Luanda and Cuanda Cubango. The central region comprised the districts of Cuanza-Sul, Huambo, Bie and the southern half of Malange. The southern region included the districts of Moçâmedes, Huila, Cunene and the western half of Cuando Cubango (Bender 1978:165).

experienced identical social and economic challenges despite the so-called goals of the resettlement.

According to Padua (who served as a doctor with the Portuguese army in northern Angola in 1961), an estimate of 200 000 Africans returned and lived in the resettlements. However, according to Bender (1978:166), they were between two fires: hiding in the forests would make them vulnerable to attacks from both the Portuguese and nationalists forces and they were unable to secure urban employment or work on the land. Faced with starvation, resettlement offered them “protection and the likelihood of obtaining jobs on nearby coffee plantations”.

The resettlements did not improve or maintain their previous standard of living. The economic decline affected the Africans badly. Independent African coffee growers were paid low prices (approximately 30% of export value) for their coffee while those who worked on the coffee plantations were paid between \$0.70 and \$1.00 during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This was insufficient to meet their basic needs. In addition, taxes were extremely high, and the cost of living increased.¹⁹

These social and economic challenges motivated the people in the North to join the nationalists and undermine the authority of the Portuguese. According to Ramiro Ladeiro Monteiro (Chief of Cabinet of the Services for the Centralization and Coordination of Intelligence of Angola at the time), this was because of “occasional food deficiencies, labour relations which were hardly honourable, low wages, and a disproportionate profit for the employers” (as quoted in Bender 1978:169). Therefore, it is not surprising that between 1960 and 1970, there was a decline in the population in the northern districts whereas in number of Angolans living in the Republic of Zaire had increased by 600 000 in 1973 (UN 1974:3 in Bender 1978).

In the East, the strategic resettlement brought approximately 70% of Angolans to Luanda and the Moxico Districts. However, the Portuguese used violence to force people to move into the resettlement houses, and the Africans faced numerous challenges such as a lack of sanitation, the spread of communicable diseases and little to no agricultural aid²⁰. Moreover, there were insufficient schools and teachers in the strategic resettlements (Samuels 1967 in

¹⁹ See *Economia Portuguesa* (1970:16) for figures on the increase of the cost of living in Angola (Bender 1978). Direct taxes increased by 97% and indirect taxes by 114% during the first half of the war and the minimum wage varied from district to district but it was approximately 300 escudos. This is approximately \$ 3.15 in 2018 (A provincial de Angola, 8 March 1973 in Bender 1978).

²⁰ A report in 1969 by the Benguela Railroad Company found that half of the eastern part of Angola became an unproductive agricultural area and the cassava production was down by 90% in the Moxico District and there was almost not the rice crop (1969: 176 in Bender 1978).

Bender 1978:173). According to Heimer (1973a in Bender 1978), 57% of villages in South Angola had no schools, and the available schools were short staffed.

“Between 1964 and 1969 an average of only 100 primary school teachers per year were trained in Angola’s four teacher training schools and only 200 primary school monitors per year...just over two-thirds of all teachers in rural in rural Angola in 1971 received no more than four years of primary education” (Heimer 1973a:91 in Bender 1978). There was only one secondary school in the East, built in the 1960s and primarily attended by Europeans. In 1972-73, Luanda’s newspapers reported a severe shortfall in the production of rice, potatoes, onions and maize. The need to import these products was thus a direct and indirect consequence of the resettlement reforms. In the South, the Africans lost most of their land due to the resettlements. Between 1968 and 1970, the Europeans’ land ownership almost doubled from 249 039 to 526 270 hectares whereas the amount of land cultivated by Angolans decreased by more than a third (36.5%) (Carrico & Morais 1971:24 in Bender 1978).

All these social and economic challenges experienced by the Angolans under the Portuguese gave them hope that should they join the liberation movements and fight for the independence of Angola, it would restore their human dignity by improving their social and economic circumstances. However, the proclamation of independence in 1975 started a civil war between the FNLA, the MPLA and UNITA and once again, the Angolan population were negatively affected.

2.3 LIFE IN INDEPENDENT ANGOLA: FROM 1975

This section aims to highlight the conditions in which the Angolans found themselves during the civil war as a way of understanding the reasons some of them (like the Angolan members of 32 Battalion) migrated to Namibia or other nearby countries.

The MPLA proclaimed Angola’s independence on 11 November 1975 after the signing of the Alvor agreement in Alvor, Portugal in January of that year²¹ and overthrowing UNITA and the FNLA in Luanda with the help of Cuban troops²². However, the independence movements did not abide by the Alvor agreement due to mistrust and hostilities soon broke out between

²¹ This agreement required the establishment of a transitional government with a Portuguese high commissioner and collegiums of presidency from the three liberation movements and twelve ministries divided equally among the FNLA, the MPLA, UNITA and Portugal. Moreover, a new national army had to be formed (Birmingham 1990 in Ngongo 2012).

²² UNITA and the FNLA refused to accept the MPLA’s authority and as such, the parties asked for external assistance; the MPLA had the support of the Soviet Union and Cuba, the United States and South Africa helped UNITA, and the FNLA was assisted by Zaire. This became a cold war (Black 1992 in Ngongo 2012).

the MPLA, UNITA and the FNLA. This was not unexpected, because in the process of struggling to overthrow the colonial government, these movements engaged in continuous violent hostilities amongst themselves in the hopes of securing post-independence power. Tahri (2007 in Ngongo 2012) argues that UNITA, the FNLA and the MPLA ultimately jeopardised the true vision of the struggle for independence by using finances that could be directed towards the population to subsidise their war efforts.

The civil war further damaged the already poor socioeconomic infrastructure left by the Portuguese and escalated human poverty (Ngongo 2012:10). The war destroyed roads, railways, and bridges built during Portuguese rule and decimated agricultural infrastructure (Hanson 2008). The war also led to international and local migration of Angolans due to mounting socio-economic challenges. According to *World History* (2015), refugees poured into neighbouring countries, notably Zaire and Zambia. By the mid-1990s, 1.2 million Angolans were refugees or internally displaced persons; there were 70 000 amputees and tens of thousands of street children. Agricultural production collapsed, as did industrial production. Gyimah (2018) argues that over 500 000 Angolans fled the country during the war. Hanson (2008) argues that an estimated 1.5 million people died, more than 4 million were internally displaced, and another 500 000 fled the country. Displacement (internally or externally) in these instances was the direct result of anti-colonial and post-independence war.

During the intense and violent post-independence war between UNITA, the FNLA and the MPLA, it was mostly civilians who were affected. UNITA was brutal towards civilians. Those who found themselves in UNITA controlled areas experienced physical assaults, mutilations, forced conscription, looting and extrajudicial killings (Human Rights Watch 2003). As a result, villagers would abandon their homes and hide in *matas* (bushes), eating wild fruits or roots, while trying to find government-controlled areas. In addition, often UNITA would force civilians to leave their homes without their belongings, and they had to survive in and new locations without clothes, food or medicines. Due to the long distances they had to travel, some would die on the way due to lack of food or because of landmine injuries or diseases. In his study, Brinkman (2000) found that during the colonial period the reason for violence was to cast the Portuguese out of Angola, but an interviewee pointed out that during the war of independence “black people started fighting black people”. Most of the informants in Brinkman’s study were MPLA supporters, and although they were willing to participate in the study, they feared that Brinkman was a police informant, and that participating in the study would result in them being taken to prison or back to Angola. They also feared torture by

UNITA soldiers and Brinkman speculated that it might have been the informants' justification for their relocation to Namibia.

The civilians who stayed behind in these areas had to work like slaves: the men were either forced into conscription, to cut firewood or loot for the rebels; the women and girls were abducted and used as sex slaves while they were forced to wash the rebels' uniforms, prepare the campsites and cook for them.

In Chimamanda Adichie's book, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007), which she wrote about the Biafra war,²³ she does not only expose the cruelty that war brings out in people, but also how war forces one to make drastic decisions. For example, the character Ugwu (captured and forced into conscription) participates in the rape of a bar girl and Okoema, another character, abandons her writing to fight in the war. Furthermore, food becomes so scarce during war that people are forced to eat whatever they can get their hands on, as long it does not kill them, as illustrated in the book when the characters end up eating lizards. At the end of the book, one of the main characters, Kainene (who went in search of food) is nowhere to be found and her sister, Olanna, is left wondering if she is dead or alive. Displacement is one of the direct consequences of the war.

The army, *Forças Armadas Angolanas* (FAA) and *Polícia Nacional de Angola* (PNA) also played a role in the displacement of Angolan citizens. When they gained control of a UNITA-led area, they treated the villagers inhumanly as a form of punishment for supporting UNITA. Moreover, the FAA would round up all the villagers in and around the area they have captured, which they would refer to as *limpeza* (cleansing) (Human Rights Watch 2003). The aim of this was to eliminate all UNITA supporters and to recruit fit men to assist them in fighting UNITA.

During these operations, the men would be harassed, beaten, sexually abused or forced to serve as porters and carry looted goods to the nearest towns. Thereafter, they took over the towns and sent these men to the nearest municipalities. Furthermore, the soldiers did not receive sufficient food for themselves and their families and therefore made use of these men or displaced people to go search for food on their behalf. Due to the lack of food and the miserable conditions in the municipalities controlled by the soldiers, the civilians tried to escape at night to go back to their houses in search of food and risk their lives to the danger

²³ Also known as the Nigerian civil war, which occurred between 6 July 1967 and 15 January 1970. This war was between the government of Nigeria and the secessionist state of Biafra and the aim was to put an end to the division of Biafra from the original Nigeria.

of landmines or captivity by government forces or UNITA. In the end, people were either internally displaced or left the country and became refugees abroad.

These Africans had few options: in the forests they were vulnerable to attacks from both the nationalists and the Portuguese and in Zaire conditions were not satisfactory either as most refugees were unable to secure urban employment and faced starvation (Bender 1978). The difficulty to secure employment can be attributed to the Angolan population's lack of education or qualifications caused mostly by the colonial government and the war.

We cannot forget that in Angola in 1950, less than 5% of all children between the ages of 5 and 14 were enrolled in schools while 97% of all older Africans were illiterate. In 1951 only 37 students graduated in the entire colony, the majority of which were white. Education was not a priority in Angola and this was evident in the fact that Angola had only 14, 898 primary school students of which two-thirds were white (Bender 1978). These social and economic difficulties Angolans experienced during the colonial period and the war of independence affected their social well-being and livelihoods. The high migration rate of Angolans from their home country is not surprising although being a refugee in a foreign country brings its own challenges. In such circumstances one is forced to come up with alternatives to secure ones' basic needs even if it includes joining 32 Battalion to fight one's own countrymen.

In the following section I look at Moyd's book *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa*, which analyses why African men chose to become colonial soldiers (*askari*).

2.4 UNDERSTANDING 'ASKARIS'

"Attractive incentives, as well as visible and less visible coercive factors that limit, or make impossible, other kinds of opportunities lead people to negotiate their circumstantial tight corners" (Moyd 2014:35).

Michelle Moyd (2014) complicates the extant literature by arguing that *askari* engaged in brutal military activities in exchange for wages that would earn them respect within the community and enable them to provide for their families while validating their masculinity through their loyalty to German colonialism. Furthermore, Moyd shows that the *askari* expected their service and social relations to unfold within colonial confines of obedience but also expected to be treated with respect and to be accorded a certain degree of esteem. Through their loyalty, they obtained power and autonomy for themselves and their families. In return for their ruthless service as soldiers and as a "constabulary force, assisting in the day-to-day policing and administration of the colony", they benefited from these military

actions and validated their masculinity by capturing women and children while salaried service gave them access to the cash economy and the ability to engage in conspicuous consumption and patronage. Thus, although being an *askari* was not an ideal situation it offered them an option in difficult circumstances.

Jacob Dlamini's *Askari: A Story of Collaboration and Betrayal in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (2014) complicates the picture further still. In the book, Dlamini uses the case of Glory Sedibe (or 'Comrade September') to grapple with the themes of betrayal and collaboration in the apartheid era "through the lens of complicity and collaboration" (Rueedi, 2015).

Very few people have looked beyond the black and white conflict of South Africa for reasons for these phenomena, but Dlamini shows that it is important to look at the social, moral and political universe in which apartheid collaborators like 'Comrade September' worked and lived.

In the historiography of 32 Battalion, focus has been limited to the conflict in the South African context and the unit's involvement in the 'Border war' and later in the townships. No consideration has been paid to the social circumstances that Angolans found themselves in prior to them joining 32 Battalion. It is equally important to unpack how the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of 32 Battalion was implemented, particularly because whilst some members were integrated into the new SANDF, others resigned and received a retrenchment package, *o pacote* (financial compensation). Those who received the retrenchment packages and remained in Pomfret are of particular interest to this study. The aim is to investigate if the packages were sufficient and how it contributed to their current situations.

2.5 DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION AND REINTEGRATION

The end of civil wars and restructuring of post-conflict societies lead to downsizing of armies (Zunguza et al. 2001) and over the last decade in Africa, demobilisation processes have followed the end of conflicts (Kingma 1999). Countries where these processes have happened include Mozambique, Uganda, Angola, Chad, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe.

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) were conceptualized to ensure the well-being of former combatants' post-war lives and preserve the security of the state's population (Castillo 2008). Ex-combatants' skills are frequently limited to being 'instruments of war' and thus it is feared that those unemployed ex-combatants could resort to crime or political insurrection and jeopardize national reconciliation efforts or economic reconstruction (World Bank 1996). The aim of DDR is to equip the ex-combatants with the capacity to peacefully and legitimately transition into their lives as civilians without using violence

(Muggah 2009). However, according to former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Anna, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration have different objectives.

Disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunitions, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants. Furthermore, it is within this phase where a management programme is put in place to prevent the circulation of the collected arms in civil society. In Liberia, the DDRR (Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reinsertion and Reintegration) resumed in 2004 (it was interrupted in 2003 due to criticism of missteps and inadequate preparation of the programme) and after the completion of the disarmament and demobilization process of approximately 103 000 ex-combatants, more than 28 314 weapons, about 6 500 000 small arms ammunitions and 33 604 other projectiles and explosives were reportedly collected (NCDDRR/UNDP 2008 in Forsther 2011).

Demobilisation on the other hand, is the significant reduction of people employed in the military and/or by opposition and paramilitary forces (Motumi & McKenzie 1998:182-183). It is during this phase that combatants become ex-combatants due to the end of the conflict/war, defeat of one of the fighting parties, disarmament agreements, financial shortages or shifts in military strategies (Motumi & McKenzie 1998). In the case of 32 Battalion, after the unit was disbanded, the former combatants were given a choice between two options: either be integrated into the new South African National Defence Force or be retrenched and receive a severance package.

Demobilisation may also take place informally whereby combatants become ex-combatants without a demobilisation programme in place to address this transition (Cock 1993:1). The demobilization process involves the physical relocation of soldiers from the military sites with some short-term social reintegration assistance, which may include congregating the soldiers at assembly points and disarming them while sorting out the administration. Moreover, short-term social reintegration as part of the demobilisation process may include financial or educational assistance, health care, psychological counselling and assistance in securing accommodation or employment but this can differ from country to country (Motumi & McKenzie 1998:183).

Reintegration is a long and continuous commitment to the social and economic process of development during which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and legitimate income. According to Uganda Veterans' Assistance Board, reintegration is the "sum total of processes by means of which the veteran is helped to become an acclimatised member of the community. It also refers to the actual state of feeling part of and being accepted by the members of the community belonging to the resettlement area" (Mondo 1996:92). Motumi and McKenzie (1998:186) add that "at an

individual level, many soldiers face problems in making the transition from military to civilian life and many do not have the skills or experience needed for civilian work. Militaries operate in a hierarchical manner with little regard for creative and lateral thinking required in many sectors of civilian life”.

Research conducted in countries such as Mozambique, Uganda, Angola, Chad and Zimbabwe have found that ex-combatants often have limited education, lack basic marketable job skills and sometimes, the social skills necessary for economic and social reintegration (The World Bank 1996:18).

In South Africa, demobilisation refers to the process whereby former MK and Azanian People’s Liberation Army (APLA) cadres did not join the newly constituted SANDF, either because they did not meet the requirements or did not wish to follow a career in the military (Gear 2002). In 1994 it was estimated that approximately 138 000 personnel would be integrated into the SANDF which would comprise of 90 000 former SADF members, 32 000 from MK, 6 000 from APLA and 11 000 from former homeland armies. Eventually, only 101 000 personnel were integrated, thus after demobilisation and rationalisation, SANDF force levels stood at approximately 78 000, of which 15 000 are from liberation movements while thousands of SADF members have either taken voluntary severance packages or did not renew their contracts when these expired (Institute for Security Studies 2001). However, this demobilisation process started informally in the early 1990s as MK cadres were returning from exile as “unarmed civilians” whilst the SADF was reducing its force levels through retrenchments (Cock 1993:1). Many ex-combatants were not included in the demobilisation or integration processes, including 12 872 former liberation fighters whose names appeared on the Certified Personnel Register (Gear 2002). This can be attributed to the manner in which the demobilisation and reintegration was implemented.

The first step of demobilisation and reintegration was the compilation of the Certified Personnel Register (CPR). Thus, the seven-armed forces (the SADF, each of the former TBVC defence forces (Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda, Ciskei), MK and APLA) had to submit a list of all its members who were to be integrated into the SANDF. However, this was challenging for non-statutory forces due to the lack of personnel records and the historical use of *noms de guerre*. Thereafter, the integration process began in 1994 where all chosen members assembled at the SADF bases in Wallmansthal, Hoedspruit and De Brug where administration took place. The placement process was overseen by all integrating forces and the British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT) and all cadres were tested, graded and ranked. Those who were successful received conventional armed force training whilst those who failed were demobilised immediately (Motumi & McKenzie

1998:90). This process was meant to be simple and without complications. Initially the integration process was projected to end at the end of 1994, but it had to be prolonged for another three years (Institute for Security Studies 2001) and the Chairperson of the Integration Committee reported that it took seven years.

Furthermore, many of those who passed the grading stage chose demobilisation, rather than integration, when they felt that the integration process was unfair and disrespectful (Gear 2002). The demobilisation process started 16 months after the integration process in August 1995. This programme would facilitate a way out for the soldiers who were “not eligible for service in the SANDF based on age, education or health as well as those refusing integration into the SANDF and those dissatisfied with rank or salary after acceptance into the SANDF” (Institute for Security Studies in Gear, 2002: 43). There were some criticisms levelled against the demobilisation and reintegration process especially because former non-statutory forces were affected. Some commentators argued that the demobilisation process “was not so much an attempt to reduce the force numbers, to deal with ex-combatants from the liberation forces who did not qualify for integration or chose not to integrate” (Motumi & McKenzie 1998:194).

The programme consisted of provision of once-off cash gratuities, limited counselling and an opportunity to participate in literacy and vocational training courses provided by the SANDF's Service Corps. The assistance provided was criticised for its inappropriateness and inadequacy. The programme was also investigated for its bureaucratic delays and legal problems (Institute for Security Studies 2001). Moreover, although it was reported that in 2001, 9 771 members received demobilisation gratuities (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2001), the programme did not provide mechanisms or support to the ex-combatants to invest their money. This resulted in the packages being spent quickly without thinking about the future. The training that was provided by the Service Corps was not demand driven and did not reflect the cadres' needs. These courses were conducted by military personnel, who themselves lacked the skills required in non-military environments. Subjects like psychological counselling and life-skills advice were not given enough attention (Mokalobe 1998 in Gear 2002).

The way in which the demobilization and reintegration process was implemented in South Africa as shown above causes one to ask whether the government has done enough to ensure the well-being of ex-combatants post-1993 and how this has impacted on their livelihoods. In an article published in News24, 22 of May 2017, an ex-combatant complained about the way the government is treating them due to the lack of services in Pomfret. Additionally, taking into consideration that the former combatants were each paid

approximately \$32,000 (30,000 euros and approximately R 474 880 in today's terms), how did the ex-combatants make use of the payouts and did the government offer financial advice? Equally important is the need to look at the 'home' literature which comprises of place attachment and place identity theories in the context of migration to understand why former ex-combatants want to remain in Pomfret regardless of its lack of services such as water, electricity infrastructure and sanitation.

2.6 MIGRATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE CONCEPT OF HOME AND 'SENSE OF COMMUNITY'

According to Angela McIntyre, a researcher who has previously worked with the Pomfret community, the SANDF wanted to relocate the Pomfret residents to Rustenburg and Zeerust since the late 1990s. However, the residents approached, then Premier of North West, Popo Molefe, who agreed to let them stay in exchange for their support of the ANC (Sosibo 2007). Since then, Pomfret has become a 'ghost town' especially since it was reported that nine men from Pomfret were part of the mercenary group involved in the plot to overthrow the government of Equatorial Guinea in 2004 (Omar & Taylor 2011). According to the families of these men, they (the families) did not know about their relatives' involvement in the plot, all they knew is that "the men went to get bread" (Pearce 2005).

This incident supported the government's view that Pomfret "was an untapped pool of mercenaries who could easily be mobilised" (Sosibo 2007) and negatively impact on South Africa's security. As a result, then President Mbeki signed in 2007 the 2006 Prohibition of Mercenary Activities and Regulation of Certain Activities in Country of Armed Conflict Act which "aims to prohibit South Africans from engaging in mercenary activity and to regulate the provision of security services in countries of armed conflict" (West Cape News 2010). Department of Defence spokesperson, Sam Mkhwanazi, argued that the relocation of people from Pomfret had nothing to do with the security threat but that it was due to the department's housing policy and its compassion for former employees. He said, "the important issue here is asbestos. As a caring department, these people have a constitutional right as South African citizens not to live in an area that will negatively impact on their health" (Sosibo 2007). But McIntyre disputes this argument stating that a comprehensive asbestos rehabilitation programme was initiated in 1989 which "needs to be regularly maintained, a process... which is relatively inexpensive and can be carried out by the community" (Sosibo 2007)

The latest attempt to relocate the ex-combatants and their families was in 2008 when houses were "damaged or destroyed in a bid to pressure residents, mostly former soldiers to relocate" (Mail & Guardian 2008).

While 30 households volunteered to relocate to Mafikeng and were assisted with transportation and furniture removals by the government (Mochalibane 2008); the other Pomfret residents refused to relocate even if Pomfret would be without healthcare, jobs, basic services, and many buildings are dilapidated. I therefore look in this section at the concepts 'home' (nostalgia), 'sense of community', 'belonging', "memory" and 'aging in place' to make sense of the reasons the remaining ex-combatants and their families refuse to relocate regardless of the government's willingness to give them housing subsidies, which will enable them to relocate, or to relocate them to government houses.

Migration is a very complicated global issue and there is no universally accepted definition of the term. Generally, migration suggests movement, dislocation and the crossing of borders and boundaries (Ahmed 1999). Eisenstadt (1953 in Sinha, 2005) defines migration as the physical transition of an individual or group from one society to another. This involves abandoning one social setting and entering a different one. Here, the accent is on leaving a total arrangement of social existence in a place, and setting up another arrangement of social life in a new locale. This can happen nationally or internationally. The former refers to migration within a country, such as moving to different a village or district or province. The latter refers to migration between states (Sinha 2005). Migration can happen voluntarily or forcibly. In the first instance, the migrant chooses to migrate for personal reasons. In the second, the migrant has no choice whether to go or to stay. Even in the latter case, the migrant can retain some form of power (Sinha 2005:410).

Migration can be a positive experience, a "transgressive and liberating departure from living-as-usual in which identity is rendered impossible" (Ahmed 1999:331-332). However, it involves the abandonment of one's home, and can, therefore, be quite traumatic. In the case of the Angolan ex-combatants, they were forced to flee Angola due to the violent conflict between the different political parties and were displaced from their homeland. As is the case with 'migration', 'home' is a hard concept to pin down. In the most general sense, the word refers to where one lives, to where one's family lives, or to one's native country. However, Chamber (1994) and Braidotti (1994) prefer to define home in terms of what it is not: home is not homelessness, home is not migration, and home is not exile. Ahmed (1999:339) argues that in defining home in this way, it "becomes associated with stasis, boundaries, identity and fixity. Home is...constructed as a purified space of belonging in which the subject is too comfortable to question the limits or borders of her or his experiences, indeed, where the subject is so at ease that she/he does not think." Therefore, home is "too familiar, safe and comfortable to allow for critical thought". 'Home' is also a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. Migration can therefore also "be considered a process of estrangement, a process of becoming estranged from what was

inhabited as home...to become estranged from one another... to move from being friends to strangers, from familiarity to strangeness.” (Ahmed 1999:341-344).

The theory of place attachment, which refers to the affective connection between people and a specific place, allows us to elaborate on the concept of home. Lewicka (2008) argues that place attachment comprises of three components: affective, cognitive and behavioural.

This means that an individual may be attached to a place for reasons related to feelings or attitudes; perceptions or intuition resulting from cognition, and behaviour related reasons. However, according to Scannell and Gifford (2010), affect, cognition and behaviour form part of the process dimension, which is just a portion of place attachment. The personal dimension is about the actor: who is attached and to what extent is the attachment individual or collective? Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) argue that there is a higher sense of attachment if one has created memories in such a setting and this ensures self-stability.

On the other hand, at group level, the reference is the mutual symbolic meanings attached to a place among a specific group of people (Low 1992 in Scannell and Gifford 2010). Fried (1963) and Gans (1962) have shown that attachment can be a community process within which groups become attached to places within which they can practice and conserve their identities. Identity can attach people to a place due to shared historical experiences, values and symbols (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Religion can also form place attachment if certain places come to be viewed as sacred (Mazumdar & Mazumdar 2004 in Scannell & Gifford 2010). These may include places such as places of worship, shrines, burial sites etc.

It is also important to note that housing is fundamental to social life, specifically “how and where people are housed” (Stone & Hulse 2007:1). Stone and Hulse (2007) argue that the effects of housing are important, because housing helps to foster a sense of belonging. What is more, certain characteristics of a house, such as the type of house, are related to an individual’s social connectedness with others, influencing their interaction with, and feelings about, others (Stone & Hulse 2007). Purchasing a house also increases one’s engagement with a place. In an essay, that explores the growing purchasing and construction of residential properties by African women in the Free State and Lesotho, Dr Khumiso Moguerane argues that acquiring residential property is shaped by codes of honour and other practices. For example, there is a form of ‘shame’ in living in a rented house (people gossip) and therefore, the ideal is to own a house no matter how small. She concludes that home ownership speaks to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about the future. Madigan et al. (1990 in Mallet 2004:66) maintains that home ownership is “a source of personal identity and status and/or a source of personal and family security”.

Beyond the home, neighbourhoods and communities play a significant role in people's desire to stay put. Wiles et al. (2011) investigated how older people in two New Zealand communities understand the meaning of "aging in place." They found that "aging in place" was an advantage in terms of sense of attachment or connection and feelings of security and familiarity in relation to both homes and communities.

In addition, ageing in place related to a sense of identity through independence and autonomy and through caring relationships and roles in places people live. In South Africa, literature on community is mostly focussed around gated communities (categorised as security villages and enclosed neighbourhoods), Landman (2002a; 2002b 2004).

Stedman (2003 in Lewicka 2008:211) argues that besides the demographics and social aspects, physical features play a considerable role in place attachment. In a study conducted around the collective memory of inhabitants in cities in Poland and Ukraine, Lewicka (2008) found that place attachment is either associated with national or local identity, which ultimately predicts the amount of ethnic bias in perceptions. In addition, her study placed significant emphasis on physical features of a place that are cues to the place's history. People's sense of history around the places they stay, she found, is likely to increase their attachment to these places. It is unsurprising that people who were attached to a specific place demonstrated greater interest in that place's past and in their roots there than people with limited emotional bonds. Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004 in Scannell & Gifford 2010) point to the fact that historical ideas that shape attachment to places can be very personal (a place can hold significance, for example, due to a personal experience such as the place where one was baptised).

When displacement took place, people try to form new attachments. One's "desire to make connections given the sense of alienation from home" (Ahmed 1996: 336) or "the feeling of being at home in several countries or cultures but not completely at home in any of them" (Seaman 1996: 53) leads to attempts to build new communities. In essence, "the very experience of leaving home and 'becoming a stranger' leads to the creation of a new 'community of strangers', a common bond with those others who have 'shared' the experience of living" elsewhere (Seaman in Ahmed 1996:336).

Community can be defined as "a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations" (MacQueen et al. 2001). McMillan and Chavis (1986) define the notion of Sense of Community (SOC) as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (McMillan & Chavis 1986:9).

Stone and Hulse (2007) note that feeling a sense of belonging within a community can be negatively affected when relocating. This is often the case for ex-soldiers. Most ex-combatants find it quite challenging to integrate into a community after a war. During war, communities are destroyed, as they become divided between combatant and non-combatant groups and within a specific community, members choose which faction to affiliate with. Consequently, some members may detach themselves from the community to such an extent that they cannot rely on the assistance of the community in times of need. "Combatants who commit atrocities against members of their communities' strike the most violent blow to social unity and these combatants are quickly ostracized from their communities" (Hazen 2007:2).

Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa have all experienced warfare between 1960 and early 1990s. The transition from war to peace forced these countries to adopt disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) to ensure the successful transformation of ex-combatants as civilians in communities.

The reintegration of ex-combatants depends on their ability to develop and uphold relations with community members, but this is dependent on the nature of the conflict in which veterans participated. Liberation fighters are more likely to be accepted than those who fought against liberation. In Mozambique many REMANO soldiers could not return to their homes because of their role in the atrocities committed against their own families and communities (Kingma in Gear 2002:38). In South Africa, those who fought on the side of the apartheid security forces, such as the members of the SADF (e.g. 32 Battalion veterans) and the SAP, are regarded as 'sell-outs' and 'traitors' by the community and thus their integration within communities can be complicated (Gear 2002:38). Even if ex-combatants are not regarded as 'enemies' or 'perpetrators', their involvement in the armed conflict may affect their relationship with those around them (Gear, 2002). Cock (1993) found that communities can display negativity and mixed attitudes towards veterans upon their arrival.

These factors may influence Pomfret residents' views on relocation. To make sense of the data I had collected in Pomfret, I further made use of the literature on nostalgia, identity and sense of belonging in the context of community and migration to better understand the reasons behind the ex-combatants' insistence on remaining in Pomfret.

2.7 MIGRATION: NOSTALGIA, MEMORY AND IDENTITY

Merrit Buyer argues that one's sense of entity is "actively and strategically constructed in relation to multiple spaces for multiple purposes" (2008:226). This is so most notably in the context of migration and forced displacement, which enforces the migrant to renegotiate their identities as one rethinks their past life and experiences and attempts to embrace the new

and unknown locale. Buyer adds that migrants have to “find a way to incorporate their histories and often painful memories into the present”, supported by McQuire who states that “to be without memory is to risk being without identity” (1998:168 in Khun Eng & Davidson, 2008:23). A study edited by Khun Eng and Davidson which explores the experiences of the Chinese migrants in Sydney, Australia, found that “subjectivities, identities and practices of Chinese migrants are inflected with the mutually constitutive relationships between migrant Others and majority white Australians” (2008:29). Stuart Hall (1987) argues that identity, either bonds or separates a group of people but also aligns people to where they will feel like they belong. Their belonging is a reflection of “their set of historical, linguistic and cultural values within and outside their own community” (Pranauskas, 2014). Hall states that our ‘identity is placed, positioned, in a culture, a language, a history’ (1986:46). Identity “bridges the gap between the “inside” and the “outside” – between the personal and the public worlds. The fact that we project “ourselves” into these cultural identities, at the same time internalising their meanings and values, making them “part of us,” helps to align our subjective feelings with the objective places we occupy in the social and cultural world” (Hall et al., 1996: 597-598).

Applying this to my dissertation would mean that one of the reasons that the participants insist on remaining in Pomfret is because they do not only ‘align’ themselves with the historical, political and socioeconomic circumstances that they were exposed to upon arrival in Pomfret and working for 32 Battalion but also that they identify with the people they are surrounded with because of the languages and the shared history.

Luicija Baškauskas did a study in Los Angeles amongst the Lithuanian refugee community and reported how a sense of community becomes essential for refugees and migrants as it helps them to ensure and sustain a sense of belonging and place. Baškauskas further observes that “asserting one’s ethnic identity through cultural and community rituals become important to reasserting one’s connection and sense of belonging to an ethnically homogenous refugee or migrant community” (Baškauskas, 1977 in Classen, 2016:17). She adds that attending church service enables community members to engage with one another and also helps to maintain a sense of belonging that one might have left behind and therefore, a sense of place depends on the life left behind and the ethnic community of the present destination country. It can be concluded that senses of place vary and migrants can rebuild their senses of place and belonging. Moreover, “people’s relationship to identity, culture and place are fluid and through an active ritual of remembrance and imagining, refugees and migrants attempt to gain control over place and territory” which could be exactly what the ex-combatants of 32 Battalion are doing in Pomfret.

Knudsen states: "To secure a positive feeling of self (who I am) through identity management, the individual often tries to negotiate on the basis of past, now lost, positions (who I was) rather than present conditions (who I have become)." (in Classen, 2016:18). However, sense of places and identity are also based on the notion of nostalgia.

In Jacob Dlamini's *Native Nostalgia*, the term nostalgia is defined further than its basic definition "a longing for home that no longer exists or never existed." He borrowed Svetlana Boym's definition of "reflective nostalgia" from her book, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001) to argue why he recollects his youth during the 1970s and 1980s with connection and yearning. Dlamini centres on occasions and perceptions that have affected how he sees himself today. In addition, "nostalgia involves particular construction of the past with particular constructions of the present such that the past is associated with beauty, pleasure, joy, simplicity and the present is viewed as more bleak, unfulfilling and difficult" (Davis, 1973; Caton & Santos, 2007 in McClinchey, 2016:7). Nostalgia as a term consolidates the Greek words *nostos* (home) and *algia* (pain or sorrow) comprising "a pain of loss" and "a regretful kind of pleasure" recalls grateful memories (Dickinson and Erben, 2006:223; Boym, 2001 in May, 2017:5).

"Nostalgia was originally used to refer to a pathological yearning for one's home country, but has since come to describe a general sense of loss and regret, a kind of mourning for the impossibility of return because the longed-for object of one's desire exists 'somewhere in the twilight of the past', unattainable... nostalgia almost invariably relates to a sense of unhappiness with the present, against which the past, or rather, an idealised version of the past, is favourably compared, and thus involves an awareness of the distance between now and then (May,2017:5).

In *Native Nostalgia*, Jacob Dlamini chooses "to focus on aspects of his past that demonstrate the richness of the culture in which he grew up". Dlamini's argument is based on Svetlana Boym's reflective nostalgia that involves individual and cultural memory which "might overlap in their frames of references... they do not coincide in their narratives and plots of identity...Reflective nostalgia (savours) details and memorial signs, perpetually deferring becoming itself... it cherishes shattered fragments of memory and space."

May furthermore argued that nostalgia could be utilized as a system to convey warmth and imperativeness to the present and found out that out of the 185 responses received for the Mass Observation Project (MOP); only four of the writers have moved on with their lives and have shifted their sense of belonging to the present. Memory linked to nostalgia also plays a significant role in sense of place. Assmann alludes to Maurice Halbwachs' unique origination of collective or social memory as the mutual or regular encounters of a particular social

gathering or aggregate given shape established through “processes of communication”. Halbwachs maintained that collective memories “form(ed) the communicative and emotional cement of a (social) group”, for example, a group that shares distinctive experiences amongst themselves such as the case of the ex-combatants of 32 Battalion; they are all originally from Angola and lived in Namibia together while working under 32 Battalion. Furthermore, they were relocated as a group from Namibia to Pomfret and share the same languages, historical background and nationality.

Halbwachs further argues that social groups build on their collective memories through “symbolic media such as texts, images, monuments, anniversaries and commemorative festivals” which ultimately imposes the group’s collective identity. Here, the group’s solidarity is the result of “acquired through learning, participation in the rituals, and all the other practical ways in which people integrate into a community” (Assmann, 2012:175). Anne-Marie Fortier’s *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space and Identity* examines the emotional universe of Italian migrants in England in a predominantly Anglican setting by focusing on Catholic and Anglican religious beliefs and maintaining that the relationship between these two influences migrants to find their uniqueness and the development of new social relations through marriage, neighborhood and regular difficulties presented by society and migrants’ way of life. “The persistence of religious attitudes is attributed to the strong religious identity before migration and the role of ceremonies which makes possible the togetherness based on kinship networks, common occupations, neighbourhood and...racial identity” (Altamirano, 2002: 952).

Assmann further argues that memory has both roles of remembering and forgetting. On a cultural level, memory is “focus and bias” in that the group will remember what the group deems as the high point from the past and how to present its current situation. However, on a psychological level, there is an inclination for “painful or incongruent memories (to be) hidden, displaced, overwritten and possibly effaced” (Assmann, 2008:97 in Kahimbaara, 2016:9). Assmann also states that “the continuous process of forgetting” is fundamental to the generational movement of social memory so that one can make space for new and important information that concerns both the present and future. From the above, it is clear that concepts such as nostalgia and identity will be valuable tools to use in order to analyse and interpret ex-combatants’ sense of place and belonging in relation to Pomfret to reveal clues as to how the ex-combatants relate to Pomfret to date.

CHAPTER 3: FORMER ANGOLAN EX-COMBATANTS' LIVELIHOODS POST 1993 IN POMFRET, NORTH WEST

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Pearce (2015:180 in Adesina) argues that that the civil war in Angola “was never a conflict between communities of people defined on the basis of mutually incompatible ... interests.” Rather the effects of war on the people led them to assume particular political identifications. Consequently, civilians were forced to make strategic decisions about where to live and who to affiliate with. Some migrated internally and others, such as the Angolan ex-combatants of 32 Battalion, found refuge in neighbouring countries like Namibia. However, the social challenges in these countries (e.g. the lack employment) ultimately meant that their basic needs were not, or only barely, met. In Angola, civilians became members and were loyal to a specific political party or movement that was in control of their local areas as a means of survival. “Peasant farmers, particularly those who had suffered violence from both armies at different times, had no choice but to cooperate with whichever was dominant in order to avoid punishment” (Adesina 2017).

Upon their arrival in South Africa in 1989, the Angolan combatants of 32 Battalion were given citizenship and after the disbandment of the unit in 1993, some were incorporated into the new Defence Force. Therefore, the army or government had an obligation to secure their livelihoods, even of those who opted for the severance packages. The packages they were offered were supposed to fulfil this obligation. This chapter seeks to investigate whether these packages (money, housing, etc.) were sufficient and how it contributed to their current situation in Pomfret. Were the obligations of government or the army fulfilled and are they

still being fulfilled? I will also look at the ways in which the ex-combatants have been trying to make ends meet.

This chapter presents and analyses data collected from eight male former combatants and two females, a widow and a wife of one of the veterans. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section one presents the personal data or demographic profiles of the participants. Section two deals with their post-32 Battalion livelihood strategies whilst section three analyses whether the packages the veterans were offered were sufficient and how it contributed to their livelihoods. The living conditions of the ex-combatants and the way they sustain themselves ultimately sheds light on the sense of 'abandonment' they feel towards the SADF.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS' LIFE HISTORIES

Ten participants (eight male ex-combatants of 32 Battalion and two females, a widow and a wife of a veteran) were interviewed during an intensive week of fieldwork in Pomfret. They all reside in Pomfret and the interviews were conducted in Portuguese, except for one participant who was more fluent in *Ngangela*. I have also made use of the interviews conducted as part of the *Missing Voices Project* archival oral history project undertaken by the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of Witwatersrand. Below I describe the participants, focusing specifically on their demographic profile. All names are pseudonyms to protect the participants, especially considering the controversies that surrounded 32 Battalion after their involvement in the Phola Park incident. There are two sections in this chapter. Section one comprises of the participants' life histories followed by a discussion thereof. Section two focuses on the ex-combatants' post-war lives, focusing mainly on their livelihoods. The living conditions of the ex-combatants and the way they sustain themselves economically sheds light on their available assets and their current situation in Pomfret.

3.2.1 LIFE HISTORIES: PARTICIPANTS

The following are truncated interviews that have as their aim to provide an overview of the life histories of the participants whose names are all pseudonyms.

Tio Hugo

Tio Hugo was born in the province of Uíge in north-western Angola in 1943. He says that he is part of the Bakongo ethnic group, and that he had been married and had three children in Angola prior to his departure to Namibia. He was the eldest of nine brothers and four sisters.

His father was a subsistence farmer who grew coffee and peanuts. He remembers that he always looked after his siblings as a young man and he never had the opportunity to go to school. He mentions that at one point, his father's health deteriorated so much that, as the eldest, he had to take care of him. In 1961 when the war intensified, he and his family ran away from their village and found themselves in Zaire (as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was called between 1971 and 1997). Based on his recollection, their lives in the DRC was very challenging at first as refugees because they had no house nor land to farm on, but as time went by, they were accepted in the community. It was in the DRC that he decided to join the FNLA, as young people were being mobilised, and he joined because he wanted to play his role in overthrowing the Portuguese in Angola.

However, he claims that the FNLA lost its power in Luanda (Angola) and he and the others found themselves in the Namibian refugee camps where Jan Breytenbach recruited them to form 32 Battalion. In Namibia, he says, the situation was normal: they would work as instructed and the children attended school, and the family lived better lives as they had houses and were given food.

He remarried in Pomfret (he met his wife in Namibia), but is currently a widower. He has five children from this marriage who are living and working in different places in South Africa (some are in Pretoria, others in Lethlabile or Mafikeng) but the youngest is still living with him (he was in grade 12 in 2016). His brother passed away and left three children behind that Tio Hugo and his late wife had to take care of. Throughout the interview, he kept referring to the positive role that his late wife played in his life. He is on military pension (R2 300 per month) and does not want to relocate because he feels that community members support each other in Pomfret.

Tio KK

Tio KK was born in Menongue, the capital city of the Angolan province of Cuando Cubango in 1934. He speaks *Bunda* and his wife *Nganguela*. He does not speak of his siblings but mentions that his father was a farmer who cultivated coffee, maize and peanuts and his mother assisted. Often, as a child, he remembers helping his parents on the farm after school (he studied up to Grade 4), but eventually left school to assist his parents on the farm fulltime. He joined the military when he was approximately 45 years old and he was one of the few people who were involved in the pro-independence war and civil war in Angola before joining 32 Battalion. His father who told him about the MPLA (he showed me his MPLA card) and he joined willingly in order to defend and protect his country although he left

with Holden Robert to form the FNLA. He mentions that he got married in Namibia and says that in Namibia, they had houses and his family stayed safely in Buffalo when the men would go to the bush. They were paid R10 per month but when they went to the bush, they would get R70 and were given food.

He has six children, of whom two are working as security guards. A third son was also working as a security guard, but he broke his leg and is now living with Tio KK and his wife. The others are in college. After the unit disbanded, he worked as a storeman for 2 SAI helping with the stock-taking of uniforms, but he was advised to settle for a severance package because of his age.

He receives the normal old age pension (R1 500 per month) and appreciates Pomfret because people help each other but he would not mind going back to Angola (he has been there four times) but says that conditions over there are very difficult.

Tio Men

Tio Men was born in Menongue in Cuando Cubango in 1955 and he is a native Chokwe speaker. He only completed grade 1 in school. He is the eldest of three brothers, who became orphans at an early age, and it was his responsibility to provide for his siblings. He became a painter to support himself and his brothers but due to the increased fighting between the rebels and the Portuguese army, had to leave their village. Thereafter, he came across the FNLA recruiters and decided to join to provide for his family. In the FNLA his duties included cooking, but he found out that the FNLA was not paying although they were given enough food.

He got married in Namibia and has five children, of whom two are working and three are still in school. He says that he cannot say whether he wants to relocate or not because the government has not come directly to address them, but he does not want to abandon the cemetery and abandon his late family members again - like they did in Namibia. After the unit disbanded, he received his severance pay. When that money ran out, he got a job as a security guard in Port Elizabeth, but due to the distance from his family, he had to resign and return to his family. He further mentions that his children studied at the Pica Pau School, but there is no assistance for them to have better job opportunities, to work in big companies for example, and thus, they end up working as security guards.

Tio Norte

Tio Norte was born in a small town called Camabatela (also known as Kamabatela Mufongo) in Kwanza-Norte in 1940. His father was a farmer who kept chickens and cattle. Emotionally,

he states that his mother died when he was still very young. He attended school until grade 2 and mentions that his father always encouraged him to develop his skills and therefore he did an apprenticeship, but he would also help his father with the farming. Due to the war, his father sent him to live with a paternal uncle in the Congolese port town of Matadi when he was about 18 years old. There, he learnt to drive, and would transport passengers between the Congo and Angola. During this time in the Congo, he decided to join the FNLA to overthrow the Portuguese colonizers in Angola and fight for the liberation of the Angolans.

During the liberation struggle, he ended up in Namibia where, in return for joining 32 Battalion, they were given houses and food and a salary of R10 per month and R70 when they went to the bush. He got married in Namibia and he says that in Namibia they were living in good conditions, whereas now in Pomfret, there is no electricity, water only comes once a week and they have nothing to eat.

He received his severance package and worked as a security guard after the unit disbanded. However, he had a stroke and since then he has been home. He does receive a pension of R1 500 per month, which he uses for household expenses. He has five children, one of whom is a daughter who sends money and visits once in a while. He explains that he is an Angolan who speaks Umbundu to his wife and uses Portuguese to communicate with his children. In the absence of electricity, they make use of a small solar system, but only use it to charge their phones during the day. They use wood to cook and they buy food in the spaza shops in Pomfret because there are no cars and no money to pay for transport. He loves traditional food, thus his wife cooks traditional food such as *funge de bombo* (cassava pap). His two grandchildren live with him and their parents send him money. He is adamant about relocating because of his health but, on the other hand, he would love to stay in Pomfret because of the life he has made in Pomfret and the support within the community.

Tia Um

She is an unemployed widow (her late husband, who she followed from Angola, passed away in 2005) who met her current partner in 2011 (at the time of the interview, he was sick and in order to be able to go to hospital, he was residing with his son in Johannesburg). She was very emotional as she lost one of her sons in 2011 and one of her daughters in 2012. Her other son is working at the airport (his salary is about R2 000 per month) and pays the school fees of his youngest brother and when he can he sends his mother R1 000. However, she often feels sorry for him and does not accept the money because he has his own responsibilities. She has a daughter who is married and living with her husband in Taung,

North West. She says that she gets emotional because she left all her family in Angola and does not have contact with them and therefore considers the people in Pomfret her family.

She survives on the R500 grant that she receives for the youngest child (11 years old). She wants to relocate closer to her family for financial reasons; her daughter is trying to build her a *mkhukhu* next to them.

Tio Cuma

Tio Cuma is an Umbundu speaking, Catholic man born in Cuma (also known as Ukuma or Ucuma), a town and municipality in the province of Huambo, Angola in 1945. Both his parents were subsistence farmers who grew sweet potatoes, maize and sugarcane that they sometimes sold for a little money. He says that he was always alternating between staying with his father and his grandfather, depending on where his father deemed it safer. He joined the FNLA when they came to his village (when he was approximately 30 years old) and he joined in order to do away with the Portuguese colony. According to Tio Cuma, in Namibia, they were treated very well, they felt valued, they stayed in a *kimbo* and they liked it because they were paid R10 per month and R70 when they went to the bush. They were also given sufficient food; so much so that some even went to waste.

He says that it pains him that his children will never know where their father came from because they do not have enough money to travel to Angola (he has been there to visit his family). He does not want to relocate from Pomfret because the house was given to him by the SADF. Furthermore, the community supports each other. He has four children and while one lives with him, the others are working and assist him when they can. He worked as a security guard after the unit disbanded, but when he turned 65, he had to retire and had been on the Mandela pension fund since then. His wife does not work. He has diabetes and eye-problems. They buy food on credit at the spaza shop during the month and only pay when he receives his pension.

Tia Dois

Tia Dois was born in Camacupa (a town and municipality in the province of Bie in Angola) in 1957 and she was 25 when she followed her husband, who was an FNLA troop. She does not have contact with her family and it pains her that she is alone without her family. In Namibia, they had houses and would continuously be anxious when the husbands left to go to the bush. She always tried to find a way to assist her family financially, such as selling beer.

She acknowledges that there was no electricity in Namibia and that they would use gas/wood for cooking, but they were always given food. She depends on her husband's pension of R1 500. She has two sons and four daughters who work outside of Pomfret, a "damaged place", according to her. She would like to leave Pomfret, but they do not have money to buy a house and the government is not telling them exactly where they will be relocated. She uses gas and candles to cook and travels to Vryburg to buy food because the spaza shops in Pomfret are expensive. She would like to go to Angola, but cannot afford it.

Pai Grande

Pai Grande is a *Nganguela* (or *Ganguela*) speaking man, born in a town known during the colonial period as Serpa Pinto (today known as Menongue) in Cuando Cubango province in Angola in 1948. His father was a carpenter and his mother a housewife and he was the eldest, and only male, of seven children. He only studied until grade 2 and worked on a farm as a herd boy. He also trained as a builder/construction worker.

His father passed away and they moved to Cuangar around 1975 and thereafter he joined the FNLA because he wanted to join his *Nganguela* kinsmen and fight for the liberation of his country. He says that when they came from Namibia in 1989 they were immediately placed in Pomfret where the commanders allocated them houses. He is on a pension of R1 500 and has five children (two daughters and three sons). Concerning relocation, he says that the government has not approached them to tell them exactly what the plan is, and therefore, even if they decide to move, they do not know where they will be taken. Otherwise, he likes Pomfret because he feels at home, as it was the first place they were given upon their arrival in South Africa.

After the unit disbanded, and he had been persuaded to apply for the severance package, he worked for a chemical company in Johannesburg as a supervisor. However, due to his age; he was advised to retire. He has not yet visited his family in Angola due to financial difficulty, although he wants to. However, his father was killed, and his mother died and was buried in Pomfret, there is therefore perhaps not a sense of urgency. With regards to going back to Angola, he assures me that he is not undermining his country, but because he is used to the way of life here, he would rather live here in South Africa and only go to Angola to visit. He says that in Namibia they were welcomed, and life was good. They were paid and had wooden houses; they were given food and used water from the river, thus they were not paying for anything. He sometimes goes to Vryburg to buy food but due to financial constraints he sometimes has to rely on the spaza shops. He is a committed Catholic.

Tio Thomas

Tio Thomas was born in Gabela in the province of Cuaza-sul in 1953 and he is a Kimbundu speaker. His father passed away at a very young age and he lived with his unemployed mother along with his two siblings. He studied for about four years until he turned 16 years old and then moved to Luanda until he was approximately 21 years old.

In Luanda, he worked as a mechanic and electrician to support his family (he worked during the day and studied at night). Around 1974, he returned to Gabela with the intention of joining the colonial army only because he wanted a better job to provide for his family. However, his plan backfired because of the 1974 Lisbon coup and he thus he joined the FNLA when they came to Gabela to recruit young men. He was deployed to fight the MPLA. After the FNLA was defeated in Luanda, he found himself with other FNLA troops in Namibia where he joined 32 Battalion. He got married in Chitato (a municipality in the province of Lunda Norte) to his current wife and they have six children (three sons and three daughters). He did not look for alternative work after the unit disbanded; he received his severance pay and stayed at home ever since.

To support the family financially, he does small jobs like selling cold drinks and cigarettes. They travel to Vryburg to buy food in bulk that lasts for the whole month; and he says that the community helps each other very much. He does not want to relocate because he believes that he suffered and worked very hard under the SADF and they said that the houses belong to them. According to him, in Namibia, they had enough of everything and could afford to travel with their children.

Tio Calmo

Tio Calmo was born in the province of Lubango in 1952 and he is an ethnic *Mumuila* man (*Nyaneka*). He got married in Pomfret after meeting his wife in Namibia. His father was a farmer and his mother looked after the household. He is the middle child of the eight siblings and joined at the military at the age of 26 to provide for his family. Due to the circumstances of the war, he was separated from his family. However, in 2001 he went to visit his family in Angola and found that his parents and some of his relatives had already passed away.

After 32 Battalion disbanded, he did try to find alternative work, such as working “outside” (he did not give more detail on the kind of work he did) and also relied on his carpenter skills (fixing sofas, tables, chairs, etc.) in order to assist in providing financially for his family. He does have a qualification (certificate) as a carpenter, specifically as a machinery carpenter, although he only studied until grade 4.

He does not want to relocate because since they came to South Africa, they have lived in Pomfret and it is the only place with which they are familiar. In order to deal with the shortage of water, they ensure that all their big bottles are filled with water and get refilled whenever the water tank pass by. Instead of electricity; they make use of a small generator and candles (paraffin). His wife assists him by washing the clothes and cooking. They have five children; two are still living with them and three are looking for work outside of Pomfret.

The children who work help when they can and Pai Calmo understands that his children will not always be able to assist them because they have their own responsibilities such as providing for their children. He is on a civil pension of R1 500 per month. However, he is of the opinion that it is insufficient to provide for his family. He therefore repairs things such as tables and chairs to add to the little they have. He states that in Namibia they were given houses and they had sufficient food and when they went to the bush to fight in the war; the family would stay in the *kimbo*.

3.2.2 LIFE HISTORIES DISCUSSION

Ninety percent of interviewees are more than 60 years old and are no longer of working age. When 32 Battalion disbanded in 1993, most of the interviewees were in their 30s, 40s, or early 50s. Thus, they could still get jobs, seeing that the retirement age in South Africa is 65 (unless one has special reasons such as health issues).

Most women in Namibia stayed at home taking care of the household while the men were in the bush and therefore, when they arrived in Pomfret most of the women lacked any type of work experience or skills that would enable them to enter the job market. Although the ex-combatants were motivated to be economically active, they were only experienced fighters and lacked other experience that they could use to apply for other jobs.

Furthermore, there is a relatively high illiteracy rate amongst the former combatants, and their skills are limited to the military field. None of the ex-combatants or the two women have completed their primary school education. The living conditions of Africans under Portuguese rule in Angola affected their education. Bender (1978) argues that the wages that native Angolans earned was so low that they could hardly afford to send their children to school. I noticed that the participants gave various reasons as to why they did not go to school: Tio Hugo had to care for his sick father while Tio Calmo said that he had to find a job to provide for his family. Thus, there might have not been enough money for him to go to school. Due to the war, some of the ex-combatants and their spouses had the added pressure of taking in the orphaned children of their relatives. Tio Hugo mentioned that he and his wife had to take care of his deceased brother's three children.

The high illiteracy rate and low education level amongst the participants negatively influenced their ability to secure a living in a civilian environment. The ex-combatants were FNLA soldiers prior to joining 32 Battalion and therefore have always been in the military environment. Colonel Nelius (former commander of 32 Battalion) stated during his interview for the *Missing Voices Project* "... and then to make them soldiers. Start training them. So, the moment they were out of operations, they went down to training area (areas) where they were actually trained as soldiers ...out of them we've made a unit...they have basic terrorist training". Breytenbach agrees and adds that he "got the next badge (the transcriber meant batch) of recess (recces) to come and help, to come and train these guys to become counter-guerrilla operators." The Sunday Independent reported in 2011 that the soldiers were aggressive, brutal and possessed "a set of skills that made valuable soldiers in war zones worldwide." But the 'hunger' drove them to go and 'find bread' since nobody looked after them and they could not secure jobs to secure their livelihoods. As a result, Pomfret became a hiring ground for private security companies. In 2004, a group of ex-32 Battalion were arrested in Zimbabwe, allegedly after being hired to start a coup in Equatorial Guinea. An article that appeared on the news website IOL in 2004 makes the claim that former SADF personnel were being recruited from a house in Pretoria for mercenary work in the Democratic Republic of Congo and elsewhere. Col. Nelius did not dispute this accusation. In fact, he confirmed it and said that he knew one of the agents. He added, "Adriano Baptista and Manuel Baka worked for me. They were recruited at the house to perform security duties in the DRC".

In addition, 80% of the participants are married, and most have children and other dependants in their households. This means that there is an obligation to provide economically for their families. Yet without any stable income or permanent means of providing their livelihood, it is unsurprising that they choose to engage in 'illegal' economic activities or rather stay in Pomfret, where at least they have shelter.

3.3 "THE MEDALS ARE HIDDEN IN MY HOUSE BUT WHAT WILL MY CHILDREN EAT?"

After 32 Battalion ceased to exist in 1993, some of its members were transferred and integrated into other units such as the Parachute Battalions, Special Mechanised Infantry Battalions and the Recces, which meant they had to work in different parts of South Africa. The Angolan combatants had to adopt to new cultures, new languages, and new environments away from their families. The distance from Pomfret and their families drove many of them to resign. Those who did not resign became members of 2 SAI in 1994, when it was re-established in Pomfret.

This was short lived, and 2 SAI's relocation to Zeerust in 1998 (Engelbrecht 2010) resulted in further resignations. In both instances the ex-combatants were without secure employment and in 2008 it was reported that there was still an estimate of a quarter of the original 1000 32 Battalion families in Pomfret. Thus the question of how they have been surviving in Pomfret since 1993.

Through interactions with the ex-combatants in Pomfret, I noticed that they speak with pride when referring to their time in 32 Battalion and their life in Namibia but when they speak about their current situation, there is a sense of disappointment or regret, particularly on the topic of employment. Here, nostalgia is not reflected in terms of the lack of a sense of place in relation to belonging, but it is relative to a time in Namibia where the ex-combatants had better access to resources compared to their present situation. In Namibia, they were employed under 32 Battalion and thus had monthly salaries, received food rations and had houses, but presently they are unemployed and only have the houses to show for their work with 32 Battalion.

The veterans have military experiences that some used to their advantage to find employment and support their families financially. For example, Tio Unico worked as a storeman in 2 SAI where he assisted with the stocktaking of uniforms. He said that it was close to home and he liked the fact that he had a salary of his own. However, he only worked until 1995 when he was advised to opt for the severance pay before it was too late. Of the eight ex-combatant participants, 50% worked as security guards outside of Pomfret. This was after they had opted to receive the severance pay instead of being integrated into the new SANDF. While Tio Men worked in Port Elizabeth, Tio Norte and Tio Hugo worked in Pretoria and Tio Cuma worked in Mafikeng. They received between R3 500 and R5 000 monthly.

But eventually Tio Men and the others resigned because "*era muito distante da familia...não podia tirar ferias toda hora para vir ver a familia*". (It was very far from the family...I could not always take leave to come and see the family). On the other hand, Tio Cuma had to retire as he had reached the retirement age (65) in 2010 (based on my own calculations) and Tio Norte had to resign due to health complications from a stroke he had suffered.

Pai Grande worked as supervisor for a chemical engineering company in Johannesburg. He did not want to disclose the name of the company although he says that they did know that he was a former combatant of 32 Battalion. He assured me that they did not have a problem with that because "*eram brancos...eles sabiam a cerca do 32 Batalhões*" (They were whites...they knew about 32 Battalion). Based on my casual conversations with him during our time in Pomfret, it seems that Pai Grande feels that 'whites', as he refers to them here,

are more sympathetic towards them than blacks. For example, when he told me about the farmer who donates meat to them, he said “*um fazendeiro branco*” (a white farmer).

Two of the ex-combatants I interviewed did not go and look for work. Tio Thomas said that after he received his severance pay, he stayed home and did ‘small businesses’ such as selling cold-drinks and cigarettes. Tio Calmo said that after the disbandment of 32 Battalion, he got a job “*trabalhei fora*” (I worked outside).

When I enquired if it was outside South Africa and about the kind of job, he hesitated before he said “*não foi aqui em Pomfret mas não posso falar o tipo de trabalho*” (It was not here in Pomfret, but I cannot say the kind of job). He did mention traveling outside of South Africa: “*fui em Angola em 2001 para ver a família mais fiquei muito triste por que encontrei que os meus parentes e outros membros da família faleceram*” (I went to Angola to see the family but I was very sad to discover that my parents and other family members had passed on). Tio Calmo is an experienced carpenter who repairs tables, chairs, sofas and even car parts for extra money to add to the little they have in order to survive.

When we look at the above, we see that the ex-combatants have tried to find ways to make ends meet although challenges such as health problems and distance from their families led to them resigning from jobs and losing secure income and to remain in Pomfret, a place without any sort of job opportunities. Even if the women wanted to assist financially, they would have had to look for jobs away from Pomfret, as their children did when they relocated in search of job opportunities. Furthermore, some of the ex-combatants, such as Tio Calmo, took it upon themselves to use their skills to earn a little money in the community to add to the little they have. Another strategy employed by veterans such as Tio Hugo was to make extra money by selling the medals awarded to them, and the uniform and caps they used as combatants of 32 Battalion. Tio Hugo laughed when asked about his medals and uniforms and said “my grand-children misplaced it...they sold it”. I interpreted his mirth as pointing out the meaningless of the medals and uniforms, considering the financial challenges they are facing.

Tio Hugo added, “I have half of my medals, the others my grandchildren sold the medals...when I went to work ‘outside’, my grandchildren and daughters that were taking care of my wife when she was still alive, they took all the medals, ties and sold everything. The medals, there is this crazy person here, he sold the medals, the belts, the beret, everything, he sold it”. Although he clearly took pride in his medals, Tio Hugo understood that desperation drove his children to sell them in order to buy medicine for their sick mother. Tio Unico summarised the difficulty in hanging on to symbolic capital in desperate times

when he said "...the medals are hidden in my house but what will my children eat? Will they eat the medals?"

Besides highlighting the hunger and poverty they are experiencing, the fact that they are selling their former medals and uniforms highlights their sense of abandonment by the SADF. They only left them with medals, but medals do not put food on the table. Kobus Mostert (a former lieutenant in 32 Battalion) thinks that ex-32 Battalion soldiers face their current economic predicament mainly because of a lack of marketable skills.

Speaking about one soldier's situation and then extrapolating more broadly, he remarked: "He was a security guard at the First National Bank...he obviously asked me for a job but I couldn't help him and yes... he actually asked me for a job... but he wasn't skilled to do anything else [than work] as a security guard... what type of work do you let these guys do?"

3.3.1 SEVERANCE PAY

Throughout the interviews, the ex-combatants kept referring to '*o pacote*', (literally translated as 'the package', a term used amongst them to refer to the severance pay they had received). They also made it very clear that after 32 Battalion disbanded there was constant pressure from their former (mainly white) officers and non-commissioned officers to resign and to leave the defence force as they had felt that the veterans could forfeit their severance pay if they waited too long.

The participants further emphasised that they thought that they would receive a lot of money but got less than they had expected. I asked one of the participants why he left the military and he answered "because I was old and the whites said *para meter pacote* (to put package) and as such we put package thinking that it will be a lot of money but there was no money, the money was too little". All participants (except the women) in the study received their severance pay, although in the community, there are *tios* (uncles) who have not received a cent of the severance pay. Tio Unico said that he received *o pacote* of more or less R200 000 and that he was dissatisfied because it does not equate to the amount of years they worked for the SADF in Namibia.

Tio Hugo remembers that he received *o pacote* (although not the exact amount) and used it to fund his children's tuition fees. Tio Men added that "*tirar não é meter*" (taking is not putting) hence implying that the money eventually ran out. The severance pay that the veterans received sustained them for a while but, as Tio Men said, "taking is not putting" and as such, they were eventually left with nothing. The severance pay that the veterans received was a pay-out (a once-off payment for services rendered to an employer). Furthermore, the SADF pressured them to resign to receive the severance pay. It implies that the pay-out was the SADF's way of getting rid of the veterans. After the veterans

received the pay-outs, there was no guidance from the SADF on how to make 'proper' use of the money or any educational programmes on investment or savings options. Veterans' level of education was minimal, they were only used to small sums of money and yet they were given a lump sum of money (plus minus R200 000 each) as a once off payment.

During my time in Pomfret, I was told two interesting stories that illustrate that the veterans really did not know what to do with such large sums of money. In the first instance, an ex-combatant apparently received his severance pay and immediately went to a car dealership and bought himself a car although he did not have a driver's license. Even though he could not drive properly, he still purchased the car. He lived in Pomfret but bought the car in Vryburg. On his way to Pomfret (driving his brand-new car), he saw that a police vehicle was following him and out of fear, he parked the car and fled leaving the car behind. He did not return for the car.

In the second story, after receiving the severance pay and moving to Zeerust, a married couple decided to go to the bank to open a savings account for the money the husband received. However, the wife was not aware that the husband was withdrawing money without her knowledge and only found out five years later. By that time there was almost nothing left in the account. These stories illustrate that although the veterans could have used these funds to sustain their livelihoods in the long-run, the lack of financial educational programmes and proper guidance led to some of them using it in wasteful ways. It can be argued that the SADF had let them down in this regard.

3.3.2 SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital (refers to one's access to resources by virtue of membership or affiliation to a group or networks) and before I went to the field, my assumption was that most of the Angolan ex-combatants were assisted by other former South African combatants to secure some form of employment after the disbandment of the unit in 1993. Whilst the South African combatants went back to their birthplace, the Angolans were on foreign soil.

The disbandment of 32 Battalion might have been 'devastating' to the South African ex-combatants but they could still reconstruct their lives and go back to their respective homes. I remember that when I sent an email to 32 Battalion Association, I was directed to speak to Altus (an ex-signalling officer of 32 Battalion who left the unit in 1983) who is now a director at a legal firm. He redirected me to Frederich who also fought in 32 Battalion as a signalling officer, and is now an executive coach and counselling psychologist. Thus, after their time with 32 Battalion, they had the opportunity to further their studies and invest in their careers.

Others benefited from job opportunities through 'networks' established through 32 Battalion. Eon (former pathfinder of 32 Battalion) explained that through 32 Battalion he got a job

“doing landmine and bomb clearance work for a company in Iran... it’s an environmental company, I do bomb disposal...it’s a very small section of a large international company... I started doing this kind of work ... just after I left the army...about 7 months after I left. There was also a few contacts that I built while I was still in the army ...and after I left the army I was offered a job because I had demolition courses etcetera”. Unlike the situation of the Angolan veterans, 32 Battalion opened doors for him and Hansie, who was offered a bursary to study Mechanical Engineering (he did not mention where) thanks to “my knowledge of foreign weapons and knowledge of Portuguese...32 Battalion really helped me to get a future career...”

One cannot survive by depending entirely on social capital to put bread on the table. However, one can make use of one’s membership to a group to access potential benefits. The veterans have established friendships and bonds with each other and it is only understandable that they assist one another, especially since most of the Angolan ex-combatants were separated from their families as a result of the war in Angola, and therefore created ‘families’ with other combatants in Namibia, a practice which continued in Pomfret. Hansie stated that besides having an excellent time in Buffalo, he also cultivated some enduring friendships: “I have got one black troop who lives in Cape Town and I still give him work or if he is out of work I try to organise him work”. Those who can are assisting where possible because “I think they were the sacrificial lamb in the negotiation process”.

It follows that residents of Pomfret have made most of their networks in the town, and used it to build a community that could serve as a source of social capital. During a visit to Pomfret in 2015, we were dishing food for the veterans after we had *braaied* and cooked. It was Tio Antonio’s turn to be served and Tia Claudia (one of the veteran’s wives who was assisting with the cooking and dishing) insisted that we give him more food. She said that he is suffering because he did not have a wife or children and he must cook for himself. There is a genuine concern for each other in the community.

Most of the ex-combatants’ children have left their parents in Pomfret in pursuit of job opportunities elsewhere, yet the kinds of jobs they have acquired do not allow them to support their parents. In the case of Tio Hugo, three of his children are working in Pretoria, Lethlabile and Mafikeng. He only knows that the children are employed but cannot say exactly the kind of jobs they have or where they are working but assures me that what they earn is only enough to support their own families. He says that they have mentioned to him that the salary is *pouco* (little). It is not as if the children have abandoned them. Occasionally they will send about R200 but “...*podes passar uns cinco ou seis meses sem nada deles*” (you can pass five or six months without anything from them).Tio Unico also has three

children working, and they too only assist when they can. Tio Men makes the same point but he mentions that his children's jobs are not good because it is not in the government sector (to him, the government pays better than the private sector).

Therefore, they cannot rely on their children for their daily bread. Tio Norte, on the other hand, says that his daughter sends money (R250) monthly although she only visits occasionally. Tia Um was very emotional answering the question about her children because she lost one of her sons as well one of her daughters in 2011 and 2012 respectively. Her other son works at the airport and earns about R2 000 a month which he uses to pay for his youngest brother's school fees and his own living expenses. When he can, he sends her R1 000 but she feels guilty because of the added responsibility on his shoulders. She therefore declines the money, and rather survives on the R500 Child Support Grant she receives monthly.

Tia Dois is an exception. All her children are employed and they take turns sending her money, even if it is just R100. However, when I asked whether his five children support him financially, Pai Grande said, "you already know the life of children now, I mean they do not send and they don't even call". He seems to understand that they do not send him money because they have their own children to take care of. Tio Thomas agrees and adds, "When they come for holidays that's when you see a Rand, two Rand there but after they leave, it is finished. You won't see anything after that." Most of the veterans clearly cannot depend on their children to sustain their livelihoods. What they send can only be considered an addition to the available 'livelihood'.

Donations can also contribute to social capital. In 2004, after the plight of residents of Pomfret had become apparent, a decision was made to establish 32 Battalion Veteran Association to appeal for international funds and donations. Since then, people visit Pomfret and donate items like clothes, food parcels, shoes, etc. When I visited Pomfret in 2015, Liandre who is active in the Veterans Association) arranged for 'essential' packages for the veterans, which contained toothbrushes, soaps, face clothes, etc. and everybody received it with a shirt and pair of shoes. Recipients all seemed grateful, although according to Liandre, some sell these items (a sign that there is a need for money to buy food).

I once asked Pai Grande if his wife makes Angolan dishes such as *feijoada* (stew of beans with beef and pork of Portuguese origin). He answered that he cannot find the ingredients to make it, and Tio Unico added that "*comida Angolana é caro*" (Angolan food is expensive). They eat to survive, sometimes even eat Zebra meat. Pai Grande elaborates: "here we are receiving it, you know these farmers, these veterans that we worked with during that time of 32 Battalion, he knows about our suffering, what we did together with him and as such are

those that today, when they hear about the misery and the situation, they send anything, they are hitting their heads and mixing with the others to send us anything...sometimes they bring us jackets, clothes for the ladies, they give us anything like hosting a braai at the end of year.” Nevertheless, the problem with donations is that it is not a dependable or sustainable source of income.

In 2012, Emmanuel Christian Outreach (ECO) started an orphanage for children in the Pomfret area. They also launched an initiative involving the cultivation of vegetables in tunnels, irrigated with water from a borehole. The tunnels, ECO hoped, would be an effective strategy to alleviate poverty, unemployment and hunger in Pomfret. The idea was to use some of the vegetables to feed the community and to sell the rest. The money would be used to sustain the project and to uplift the community. However, the orphanage has closed down and the vegetables tunnels are starting to dry out because of a lack of maintenance. These projects, it seems, are not likely to be sustainable.

3.3.3 PENSION FUND

The veterans who participated in this study are older than 65 years and, as such, have passed the employment age and have retired. To make ends meet they are making use of their old-age pensions, which was R1 500 per month prior to 1 October 2016 (increasing to R1 510 thereafter). This year (2018), it will increase to R1 700.

Out of the eight participants, six received ordinary old-age pensions, while the other two were on military pensions of R2 300 per month. The ex-combatants do not understand why only two of them qualify for the military grant and what the procedures are to apply for an old-age pension and a military grant. The majority of the participants argue that the pension is “not enough to sustain the family.” Therefore, people like Tio Thomas found a way to supplement his pension by repairing furniture. The two women who participated in the study are not yet 60 years old and do not yet qualify for an old age pension. Tia Um receives R500 per month for her youngest child and that is what her family survives on. They use this grant to put food on the table but even just accessing food is difficult.

In Pomfret, there are only spaza shops and no supermarkets where residents can buy food in bulk. They have to put aside R180 for transport to go to Vryburg if they want to buy in bulk because the spaza shops are expensive. As one participant explains: “immediately when I get the pension money, I go get a taxi to Vryburg to buy food that is enough for the whole month”. Another participant states that “you have to leave and go to Vryburg if you want a bit of meat and so on but if you want tinned food, you buy here but you see that life here is way too expensive, the canteens (spaza shop) ‘itches’ you but also the issue of getting transport...” He uses the term ‘itches’ in order to emphasize how expensive things at the

spaza shop are. However, should you choose to go to Vryburg, there is also the issue of transport. Some even go to the extent of taking food from the spaza shop during the course of the month and only paying at the end of each month when they receive their grants and pensions. “We only buy at the canteens (spaza shop), there is not sufficient money to go to Vryburg and buy food, you get the money, and you go to the canteen to pay for the things that you took during the month”. To put something in their stomach, they are left with no option but to have debt at the spaza shop and pay once they receive their grants.

As one walks through the streets of Pomfret, there is a sense of abandonment :houses have started falling apart, the youth that has remained congregated outside a small bottle store where they talk about *chupeta*” (slang for alcohol but literally translates to pacifier), the wives and mothers are washing clothes or cleaning their houses while the children are at school and the husbands (veterans) try to find something to do just to keep busy. “*The government abandoned us, we were used like an old shirt that was already used and you do not need anymore, [thus] you throw it away.*”

However, away from the sense of anger and resentment that the ex-combatants feel towards the government expressed above by Tio Thomas, there is a sense of community that is making their current situation bearable as the members within the community as they help each other. They got donations (although it is just once in a while). Beyond the abandonment that the participants feel, it brings one to question whether the previous government has fulfilled its obligation towards the ex-combatants through the severance packages provided and what role that played in their current situation. Moreover, what role did/does the current government play in the ex-combatants’ current situation?

3.4 GOVERNMENT’S ROLE IN THE EX-COMBATANTS’ LIVELIHOODS: WERE THE PACKAGES OFFERED SUFFICIENT? WHAT ROLE IS THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT PLAYING?

The objective of this thesis is neither to discuss the politics of 32 Battalion nor whether their actions were wrong or right, or even justified. Its main objective is to investigate the ways in which the Angolan ex-combatants have reinserted themselves in Pomfret after 1993. However, it seems clear that successive governments (intentionally or unintentionally) have influenced the conditions in which the former Angolan veterans find themselves.

Initially referred to as *Jan se kaffirs* (Jan’s black troops, in South Africa the term *kaffir* was used during the apartheid era, the same period that 32 Battalion was fighting in Angola, to insult black Africans) by the other units, these Angolan troops were used by the SADF to fight in Angola. During his participation in the *Missing Voices Project*, Jan Breytenbach stated that the main reason the Angolans were included in 32 Battalion was because they

knew the area and the language, and because the SADF recognised “the value they could get”. According to Breytenbach, “these chaps, Angolans, knew the area, the terrain, they could speak Portuguese, they knew the people who were living there you see, so they come from those areas, so they were the best troops to use against SWAPO in Angola, you see, so suddenly they saw the value they could get”.

They were therefore provided with houses and salaries, and their families (who were in refugee camps during the Savannah Operation in 1975) were brought to them and located “in the Buffalo Base on the Okavango River, [a] beautiful base, [a] beautiful camp we built there...” At the base, they were initially housed in tents, but over time they got wooden houses, a school and a community hall and thus a community was created. They received food rations, and therefore the combatants could use their salaries to cover other needs. Some of the troops (as we will see in chapter 4) even took holidays. Their living conditions were acceptable to them (they lived in worse conditions in refugee camps and lost their houses and belongings under the Portuguese rule in Angola). Due to the circumstances that surrounded them and the consequences of their operations in Angola, Buffalo Base would not be their permanent home.

In South Africa, Namibia, and Angola rumours started doing the rounds about black soldiers were being deployed by the SADF. These ex-FNLA soldiers had fled Angola and the refugee camps due to the conditions there. They were in a foreign country (Namibia), most did not study beyond the foundation phase and, as such, the chances of finding employment in Namibia were limited. 32 Battalion seemed like a blessing. The SADF must have been aware that using Angolans to fight against their fellow citizens and ANC exiles were in all likelihood going to backfire on these soldiers once hostilities ended. The hostility of the ANC towards 32 Battalion started during their involvement in the 'Border War' and would affect their livelihoods when the ANC came to power and decided to disband the unit.

Most of the South African ex-national servicemen expressed disappointment at the disbandment of 32 Battalion. Jan Breytenbach remembers: “...as I look back I feel very sore about...the very unexpectedly and overnight disbanded it...it was a sad story for everyone....” Not everyone agrees about the suddenness with which the unit was disbanded, however. According to Eon:“...it started in 1989, we pulled out from Angola at the time and we sort of knew the political thing would take its course and so into that...the other guys in the unit were there just for the hell of it...it's just life, it was not an ideological thing...it was...these guys were just...they (assuming that he is referring to former FNLA soldiers) thought it was fun fighting at the time but even after I left 32 in 1987/89 roundabout

there, I sort of realised that it was maybe going to last a few more years but inevitably it was going to end”.

If Eon is correct, plans and strategies could have been in place long before the Angolan ex-combatants were moved to the isolated Pomfret in 1989. While concerns around soldiers’ safety and security make the isolated Pomfret seem like a good choice to resettle the unit, the town was a former asbestos mine that would negatively affect their health. Moreover, although the SADF did initiate a rehabilitation programme to deal with the issue of the asbestos mine, Nelius claims that the engineers did not do proper research to determine whether Pomfret was an appropriate place to relocate veterans and their families.

Another issue is the water shortage in Pomfret. There used to be water when the SADF ran the town. However, according to Nelius, the engineers were negligent, and therefore the veterans, and their families find themselves without water today. My understanding is that Pomfret falls under Public Works under Molopo Local Municipality and thus it is their responsibility to maintain Pomfret and provide basic social services such as water, electricity and a clinic. However, the Diagnostic Evaluation of the Implementation of the Pomfret Rehabilitation and Relocation Project Report Report (2017) argues that since Pomfret is under the ownership of the National Department of Public Works, the District Municipality is unable to source funding for the provision of services. These institutional complications compound problems. It is unclear which institution is responsible for dealing with the challenges that Pomfret residents face. Furthermore, according to a technical design report prepared for the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality in 2015, there was a proposal for the addition of new boreholes and Eskom Supply Points to the value of R11 101 734.79. The proposal was to repair all electrical connections to the pumps of the boreholes, repair and upgrade the overhead supply line from the Eskom bulk supply point. Yet residents live without these basic services.

Section 2 of the Constitution of South Africa enshrines the right to a clean and safe environment that is not harmful to their health for all citizens. Therefore, if the existence of the asbestos in Pomfret means that it is not a safe nor clean environment, why does the current government not take it upon themselves to continue with the rehabilitation of the asbestos? Although the Occupational Health and Safety Act does offer measures for handling asbestos contamination, it does not provide detailed guidelines as to what should happen to people living in areas close to asbestos-contaminated areas, such as Pomfret. Additionally, the South African government has yet to put legislation in place to regulate and avoid similar situations in areas like Pomfret.

Despite the controversy surrounding 32 Battalion, the SADF still made use of them in the townships to control outbreaks of violence, which added more fuel to the fire and ultimately resulted in the disbandment of the unit.

The SADF could have better prepared the ex-combatants before sending them into the townships, because during the 'Border War' they always knew who the enemy was, and the aim was always to shoot to kill. However, in the townships, the goal was to suppress the violence, but they were not trained to act as peacekeepers. What is more, the SADF should have issued the ex-combatants and their families documentation as proof of ownership of the houses they were given. Currently, the veterans do not have any documentation as proof of ownership of their houses in Pomfret and, thus, the current government, in their aim of trying to relocate the veterans and their families, could use this to their advantage to force the residents of Pomfret to relocate.

Concerning the severance pay, I believe that the SADF pressured the ex-combatants to apply for the severance pay because the SADF were afraid that the option would be taken away from the ex-combatants; and even if it was not a lot of money, it was better than nothing. To my understanding, the severance pay was just a once-off lump sum and after that, the veterans were left jobless. Furthermore, they were not taught how to save or invest the money to provide for their future. Furthermore, it is unclear how the amount the veterans received had been calculated; as they did not all receive the same pay-out. Moreover, no proper integration and demobilisation took place. I learned during interviews that some of the veterans were integrated into different units located in different parts of South Africa, while others decided to opt for the severance pay. Those who were integrated into other units of the SADF were stationed far from Pomfret, in places such as Phalaborwa and Mafikeng, and thus could not often see their families, which resulted in some resigning and taking severance packages. Liandre mentioned that she worked as an Occupational Therapist when 32 Battalion moved to Pomfret, but after its disbandment, she stopped (although she continues to assist the Pomfret residents when possible as part of the Veterans Association).

The participants' livelihoods were affected as they had to resign because of the new locations of their employment and found themselves without a salary. It is important to stress the fact that the ex-combatants are only experienced on the battlefield and have limited foundation phase education; and that most of them found themselves in the security industry where they earned very small salaries.

Concerning pensions, only two of the eight participants receive military grants. The participants could not tell me why this is the case and my inquiries led me to 32 Battalion Veterans Association. They explained that once the combatants opted for the severance

package, they forfeited the military grant benefits. This does not explain why two participants are receiving military grants even though they claim to have received their severance packages as well.

In 2015, then Deputy Minister of Military Veterans, Kebby Maphatso announced that the unemployed members of former military wings of the ANC, APLA, the PAC and the SADF would start receiving monthly grants of R3 200 and medical aid for their families (South African Labour News, 2015). The Military Veterans Act, which defines “a military veteran as a SA citizen who rendered military service to any of the military organisations involved on all sides of the South African liberation war between 1960 and 1994”, was approved by Cabinet in 2010 and by June of 2012, 3 500 veterans had registered in Cape Town (West Cape News, 2012).

32 Battalion Veterans Association should assist in trying to register the ex-combatants for these grants even though they have received severance packages. The Social Relief of Distress (SRD) initiative also falls under this Act. This will be a better option than the ordinary pension fund or child grants that the veterans currently receive. I also believe that if for the women whose husbands have died, like Tia Um, can produce their marriage certificates and force number of their late husbands, they should be eligible to receive a military grant. It is still unclear to me why the 32 Battalion Veterans Association is not informing and assisting the veterans to apply for the military veterans grant. Should they succeed, the veterans will have a slightly larger income, which could improve their standard of living. The Military Veterans Act also states that the Department of Military Veterans must provide medical aid, housing and education support to the dependents of military veterans (SABC News, 2018).

That being so, I think it is necessary to inform and educate the veterans that those whose children are yet to complete matric can apply for this assistance at tertiary level. They should be assisted to ensure that they meet the requirements so that they can be granted the opportunity to further their studies and have better employment prospects. Whether politically motivated or not, the current government is neglecting Pomfret’s deteriorating conditions and accordingly making the veterans’ lives harder. Pomfret has no electricity, limited water, no shops, no sewage removal and the cleaning of the city has been left to the residents. To add to this, since 2005, the government has been adamant that the residents of Pomfret must relocate without proper engagement with the residents.

The above chapter shows that the residents of Pomfret are mostly dependent on *o dinheiro do Mandela* (Mandela money, in other words, child support grants and pensions) for their daily bread. An important observation is the inconsistency of the allocation of the military

veterans' grants. Although everybody opted to receive severance packages, two of the participants are still receiving military grants, while the others receive an ordinary pension. Moreover, even though the veterans' children are employed in different parts of South Africa, what they earn is not enough to support their parents on a monthly basis. Although the veterans cannot depend on support from their children, what they do receive counts as a supplement to their pension, which on its own is not enough to survive on. In addition, both governments played a significant role in the current situation that the veterans find themselves in. The SADF did not do proper research on the sustainability of Pomfret as acknowledged by Nelius thus the current government cannot be held responsible for all of the challenges Pomfret is facing. Currently, it is the responsibility of the government of the day to fix the problems while maintaining the asbestos rehabilitation programme that was carried out by the mine operators, GEFCO (Griqualand Finance and Exploration Company) because the town is under their control. The SADF was negligent in the way they handled the pay-outs of the severance packages. Considering that the SADF leaders pressured the ex-combatants to apply for their severance pay-outs, it would make sense to have offered financial guidance and investment options to the ex-combatants to safeguard their interests for the future. This would have ensured that they saved a portion of their money to use in a crisis, but unfortunately that is not what happened and today, their livelihoods are not stable, and they have nothing left of their packages. Most important is perhaps the question of relocation: what are the reasons the residents of Pomfret refuse to relocate, even though the government has been persistent in this endeavour since 2005?

CHAPTER 4: “BUFFALO BUFFALO YETO NAWA...POMFRET POMFRET YETO NAWA”²⁴

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter begins by giving a community profile of Pomfret, which includes the socio-economic status of the community. It then discusses how and why the participants found themselves in Buffalo Base (Namibia) as well as how the ex-combatants and their families felt about their relocation to South Africa. It then moves on to discuss the participants' reasons for 'choosing' to remain in Pomfret regardless of its deteriorating conditions and how they relate to Pomfret as their 'home'.

Pomfret is of great significance to 32 Battalion's Angolan soldiers as it has been their 'home' since their arrival in South Africa when the 'Border War' officially ended in 1989. They could not return to Angola for they had fought their own country. They could not live in South African townships either as they were believed to have been used by the National Party in repressing anti-apartheid movements, thus the soldiers and their families were eventually settled in the army base town of Pomfret (Omar & Taylor 2011).

After their involvement in the Phola Park incident, which occurred on 8 April 1992, during which more than a hundred residents were beaten, two women were shot and at least four raped, and after the investigation by Justice Goldstone concluded that 32 Battalion was responsible for the atrocities committed against the residents; the unit was disbanded in March 1993. The disbandment of the unit resulted in some of the remaining members being integrated into the new SANDF, mainly 2 SAI, now based in Zeerust. According to reports, when 32 Battalion arrived in 1989, 6 000 people (the former troops, their spouses and dependents) settled in Pomfret (Sosibo 2007). However, towards the end of 1994, only 300 troops were still serving (in the other units, as by then 32 Battalion has been disbanded) (Nortje 2003). In 2017 Masondo reported that there are only approximately 300 families left in Pomfret. Although there are no statistics available, 2 SAI was reactivated in Pomfret after the disbandment of 32 Battalion and absorbed the remaining 32 Battalion troops. Thus, when 2 SAI relocated to Zeerust in 1998, the ex-combatants followed the unit with their families. Nonetheless, several of them opted for the severance packages²⁵ of approximately \$32 000 (approximately R417 920 today, but probably had more value in the 1990s) (Sowetan Live 2017) and stayed behind in Pomfret.

²⁴ Taken from one of the combatants' many meaningful songs in Chokwe, it translates as "Buffalo Buffalo is our home...Pomfret Pomfret is our home" (Nortje 2003:292).

²⁵ This is known as a *pacote* (severance package) issued to them when they opted to remain in Pomfret.

Since the early 2000s, the government has tried to relocate the ex-soldiers and their families.

The most recent relocation attempt was in 2008, when the police, armed with R4 rifles, were present as the North West Provincial government tried to demolish Pomfret and move its inhabitants to RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) houses in Mafikeng (approximately 239 km from Pomfret with the R378 road). The government was adamant that the asbestos mine (which is less than a kilometre from the town) posed a health risk. Then Department of Defence spokesperson, Sam Mkhwanazi said, "The important issue here is the asbestos. As a caring department, these people have a constitutional right as South African citizen not to live in an area that will negatively impact on their health. We have found about 400 houses for them in other areas of North West." (Sosibo 2007).

Moreover, after the military base moved to Zeerust in 2000, conditions in Pomfret started to deteriorate. The town, which used to have "1 200 homes, three public swimming pools, seven churches, a tennis court and state-of-the-art sports club which hosted concerts and movies" (Masondo 2017), is almost unrecognisable. The last time Pomfret had electricity was in December 2014, water only comes once a week for roughly two hours, there is no police station and even though there is a mobile clinic; it only comes once a week. Otherwise, the nearest health facility is in Setabeng (approximately 10.4 km). Regardless of the poor living conditions and the lack of job opportunities in Pomfret, the veterans refuse to be relocated and therefore, there is a need to analyse their insistence to remain in Pomfret.

4.2 POMFRET COMMUNITY PROFILING

Pomfret is situated approximately 615 km from the eastern side of Pretoria, via the N14 and the R378, and about 187 km from Vryburg, North West, via the R378 and the R379. It is a desert town, which is located on the edge of the Kalahari Desert in the North West, South Africa and 5 km from the border with Botswana. It falls within the Kagisano/Molopo Municipality and the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District of the North West Province.

Historically, Pomfret was the site of an asbestos mine, which closed in 1987 and a former SADF army base when "in 1989 6 000 former Angolans, including members of the 32 Battalion and their dependents, were settled there and given South African citizenship by the SADF as reward for their participation in the war against Namibia's SWAPO guerrillas, MK soldiers and other anti-apartheid fighters" (Sosibo 2007). After the Defence Force left Pomfret in 2000, the management of the town was left in the hands of the Department of Public Works. Since then the situation in Pomfret has worsened year after year.

Currently, Pomfret has two schools on one site: Pica Pau, a high school, and Educar, a primary school. At the time of the interview with both primary and secondary school

principals in April 2016, there were 13 primary and seven high school teachers. Of the 343 learners, 157 attended the high school and 186 the primary school. The schools do not have any sports facilities, nor a library and it has no electricity; these conditions have a negative impact on the students' performance. In 2010, the grade 12 pass rate was 10% while in 2011 it was 22%. This motivated COSATU to take charge of the school in 2012; however, the school is still facing challenges regarding water, sanitation and electricity. During my interview with the high school principal, raised concerns over the shortage of resources such as textbooks and the lack of sports facilities and a library. The local crèche was forced to close due to financial constraints.

As one heads west on the R378 towards Pomfret from Tosca (a town in the Kagisana/Molopo Local Municipality in North West, approximately 155 km from Vryburg and 47,1 km from Pomfret); one drives for an estimated 25,7 km to find a road sign indicating left, marked "Pomfret". One turn left and drives on a white pothole-riddled tar road for another 21.4 km until one reaches the end of the road and one comes across an old Coca-Cola sign on which the words "Republic of Pomfret" are sprayed in black ink. As one enters Pomfret, one immediately notices the state of the town and the severely damaged infrastructure; these include; overgrown grass, empty houses of which the roof trusses have been removed, and churches with broken windows. Most of the houses' roof trusses have been removed and apparently, there is a shortage of water pumps (at least, that is the explanation given to residents for the lack of running tap water).

Pomfret is experiencing many challenges especially the lack of basic service delivery, such as the absence of electricity, sanitation, solid waste removal, access to social and security services as well as a lack of water and sanitation services in the schools. There are high levels of unemployment in Pomfret due to the lack of socio-economic opportunities. Formal education levels are low, and this may have an influence on the types of socio-economic opportunities that may be available to the community. This has resulted in Pomfret becoming a recruiting ground for private mercenary companies in the 2000s. In 2004, "about 64 mercenaries, many of whom were former 32 Battalion members, were arrested in Harare after an ill-fated mission to oust Equatorial Guinea's dictator, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo" (Masondo 2017).

In addition, most young people have left Pomfret with the hope of securing work in places like Johannesburg, Vryburg and Pretoria but many of them ended up in the army due to the lack of education (most only have matric certificates). In 2008, the Department of Public Works allocated R115 million to maintain and improve Pomfret, however, this funding came to an abrupt end without any explanation (Hattingh 2008).

Moreover, Pomfret was rehabilitated from asbestos contamination years ago and should only require regular maintenance.

However, there is constant pressure from the government to relocate the Pomfret residents to Mafikeng due to health complications that the asbestos mine might cause; and yet the majority of the inhabitants refuse to be relocated. In March 2008, the North West Provincial Government and the “police force armed with R4 rifles and shotguns...[and] rubber bullets” (Hattingh 2008) went to Pomfret to forcefully demolish houses and force its inhabitants to relocate to Mafikeng even though only 35 families had agreed, during a meeting prior to this event, to be relocated. The question should thus be asked why the residents are reluctant to leave Pomfret, regardless of its deteriorating condition.

4.3 WE JOINED 32 BATTALION BECAUSE...

As mentioned previously, this research is a result of intensive interviews conducted in Pomfret over a period of a week in June 2016 and the attendance of social gatherings (including funerals, weddings) in places like Lethlabile and Pretoria West. Furthermore, I have also gained access to the unanalysed interviews from the University of Witwatersrand at the Historical Papers Research Archive, which were conducted as part of the *Missing Voices Project* in 2005. In each individual interview, I was initially interested in understanding the lives of the Angolan troops living in Buffalo, eastern Caprivi (Namibia).

It is important to understand how the Angolan troops found themselves in Buffalo. After the MPLA took control of Luanda and destroyed the FNLA’s headquarters on the 12 July 1975, the FNLA’s leader, Holden Roberto, “vowed²⁶ to use the 300 troops he had at Mpupa (situated on the Cuito River), 60 km north of Angola’s border with SWA” (Nortje 2003.:4). Thereafter, he approached the SADF to ask if they can assist with supplying weapons as soon as possible. This resulted in Jan Breytenbach flying to Mpupa on 30 August of that same year. This is where he first laid eyes on the FNLA troops. He was shocked by the conditions in the camp, he wrote in an official report “...millions of flies swarmed everywhere, and the stench was all-pervading. Papers, old and empty beer bottles, plastic containers and all sorts of rubbish were littered everywhere in the camp itself” (Nortje 2003:13). Moreover, when Col. Jan Breytenbach was asked about his first impressions of the ex-FNLA troops during his interview for the *Missing Voices Project*, he said:“...*real rubbish...absolute rubbish...it was in Lepupa (Mpupa), a place called Lepupa(Mpupa), we flew in there, that’s where I met them the first time and they were, ah they were...actually I also felt sorry for them, because they haven’t eaten for weeks... they were just about starving and had sores on their legs and so on, they were...I think eight rifles amongst the lot of them...so I think*

²⁶ He vowed to use them in the struggle for the liberation of Angola.

they were robbing banks mostly, to stay alive, this was after the Portuguese forces were kicked out..."

Nortje adds that "few of them had any footwear to speak of. Most were barefoot, their feet and legs pockmarked with suppurating ulcers caused by malnutrition" (2004:14). When Jan Breytenbach returned to Mpupa on 15 September 1975, he took truckloads of rations for the troops so that they could be fed and regain their physical strength for *Operations Savannah*²⁷. Based on these accounts, it is evident that the ex-combatants were experiencing real hardship and deprivation in this camp. Jan Breytenbach's return in late January 1976 (after *Operations Savannah*) with the proposal to form a full-blooded fighting unit from the Bravo Group²⁸ whilst proposing to issue "basic rations to all members of Bravo Group, along with a monthly payment from special fund of R5 per private, R10 per lance corporal and R15 per corporal" seemed to be the solution to their problems. However, the combatants only received their first salary in June. On 22 March 1976, Breytenbach was authorised to move the ex-combatants and their families to western Caprivi (bordered by the Linyati, Chobe, Cuando and Zambezi rivers). Here, they were given tents or made shelters from branches (as not enough tents were available) although their final destination and permanent residence, after 17 months and two more relocations, was Buffalo Base²⁹.

"If the troops were to be turned into fully motivated fighting men, we must house them in a well-constructed camp and quarters of which they can be proud and which can be kept clean and tidy in a manner befitting soldiers" (Jan Breytenbach in Nortje, 2003:44). In the end, the soldiers lived in Buffalo base. During his interview with the *Missing Voices Project*, Brigadier Nelius (second in Command of all troops in Namibia) stated that there was a school, a clinic and a shop in Buffalo Base. He added "...*the soldiers, we also gave English classes and the women that wanted to, they could attend English classes. They could communicate... there was a couple of them that had medical training, as nurses and medics and things like that, which I utilised and sent on our courses, and when we opened the hospital at Buffalo, some of those women were then actually acting as nurses and one of them was a sister*". In Buffalo Base, the soldiers had a balance between 'work' and family and 32 Battalion's leaders definitely knew how to keep their soldiers 'motivated', particularly by trying to bring people together and to get them involved in activities like sports and competitions.

²⁷ The SADF's first large-scale cross border intervention, which occurred from October 1975 to early 1976. This was carried out by the SADF's four battle groups (Foxbat, Zulu, Alfa and Bravo) to support UNITA and the FNLA, but to also clear SWAPO/PLAN out of Southern Angola.

²⁸ In 1975, when Jan Breytenbach first arrived in Mpupa to train the displaced troops, they were known as Bravo Group when they partook in *Operations Savannah* as black and white mercenaries from the Angolan civil war.

²⁹ Situated in Okavango, Namibia. A buffalo is also a wild animal like a large cow with horns that curve upwards, usually found in southern and eastern Africa.

Brigadier Nelius stated “...we had sport days and we had days which they...showed off what they were doing, those days they were still very...much thinking about Angola because their dances and their songs were all about one day we will go back to Angola, to our mother country, and it was...and what I had was cake competitions, where the women bake and then I got...I gave it to the troops after I'd given them (the women) a present...and also other competitions, getting everybody involved...”

To unpack the social side of life of the combatants' life in Buffalo base, I mostly made use of data collected by the *Missing Voices Project* as well as the individual comments made during my individual interviews in Pomfret. One of the most unsettling statements I came across as I read the interviews, was made by Brigadier Nelius. He bluntly stated, “*They* (the combatants) *had a choice*”. He continued “...even today (Brigadier Nelius was interviewed on 6 November 2008 as part of the *Missing Voices Project* and the use of ‘today’ could suggest the present day of interview or figuratively referring in the present circumstances that the Angolan ex-combatants find themselves)...that’s what I also ask them now when they start complaining, I said, why don’t you go back to Angola...there is no war going on there, nobody is going to kill anymore...why don’t you go back there?”

The term choice (*escolha*) does not only imply that one decides between one or two possibilities, but it also implies that the selected choice is one's favourite or the best option, which is not the case for the ex-combatants and their families. The civil war in Angola endangered the lives of the civilians; one would either be killed (as acknowledged by Nelius), or abducted (and if a woman, be sexually assaulted or turned into a ‘slave’ to cook and clean for the soldiers) or die because of landmines, diseases or as a result of hunger and tiredness from walking long distances. On the other hand, one could take a risk and try to find the nearest refugee camp.

The ex-combatants of 32 Battalion found themselves in the right place at the right time. They needed shelter and somewhere to start rebuilding their lives with their families in peace and 32 Battalion was the answer. Jan Breytenbach needed soldiers to train and fight against SWAPO and these Angolans were already ex-troops, which was an added advantage. Buffalo Base was the *kimbo* where the families were located and stayed while the combatants would go on operations of between six and seven months.

Before I began conducting the interviews in Pomfret, the participants were reluctant to participate as they thought that I wanted them to talk about their military operations, experiences, training and whom they were fighting against and that was when I realised that

they are still afraid to talk about their past as they still fear the possible consequences of their association with 32 Battalion³⁰.

They showed willingness to participate after I explained clearly that I was interested in their experiences in Pomfret and mostly in the ways in which they have made ends meet after the disbandment of the unit. However, as I engaged with each one, I realised that as they spoke about their reasons for wanting to remain in Pomfret, they tended to always refer to their life in Buffalo Base and accordingly, it makes sense to unpack the circumstances that influenced them to join 32 Battalion and the SADF.

Tio Hugo said to me during his interview that throughout the war, his family together with him were located in Zaire as refugees, which was difficult as they were constantly treated as outsiders and thus could rarely secure employment.

And in the process, he was 'displaced' and found himself in the refugee camp (Mpupa, Namibia)³¹ where he somehow ended up joining 32 Battalion. The separation from his family was difficult, but to him the situation in Namibia was normal, they would work as instructed by their superiors and the living conditions of the children and families were better than in Angola. He continued, "*we had houses made of wood even without electricity the situation wasn't as we are at the moment.*" All the participants agree that they were given food rations and received R10 monthly around 1977. Cabinda³² (during her interview in *Missing Voice Projects*) said: "*...let me just say...life was good of course...one of the things I still remember...is that the defence force used to supply...I think every Wednesday...they built in some blocks you know...some simple ones they put a place where people would go and get food...so people were not buying food...maybe what we bought was bread from the local bakers...there was no other problem with lack of money...I still remember do you know with my parents...them being teachers they would always put on holidays in December...and we would always go through out around Namibia...and my mum and dad would tell me...every December there where about ten thousand or twelve thousand (this was probably Rand, the currency that the combatants were with) for holidays...*"

³⁰ They perceived as traitors for having fought as combatants of the SADF and killing fellow Africans such as MK's troops during the Angolan civil war when the ANC was in exile and their controversy intensified when they were deployed in the townships in 1992. Inge Brinkman (2000) found that although informants were willingly to share their stories, they were afraid because of killings that were supposedly being orchestrated by UNITA and therefore they were reluctant to talk about what they did and against whom.

³¹ After they were abandoned by both Holden Roberto and Daniel Chipenda, "FNLA soldiers naturally gravitated to Mpupa" (Nortje, 2003:32). Mpupa is a small place situated on the Cuito River approximately 70 km north of SWA.

³² Cabinda found herself as a refugee in Namibia with her parents after they had escaped from Angola in 1976.

Tio Men (during my interview with him), added saying that in Namibia, they were received “...*com duas mãos*” (literally meaning with two hands, meaning they were welcomed wholeheartedly), referring to the fact that they were given free tents, houses and food. Yet it was not really free; they were working for the SADF and therefore it was the responsibility of the SADF and the leaders of 32 Battalion to support the soldiers, and now the ex-combatants. The constant referral to the food rations and houses (tents and later wooden houses) suggests that to them (then combatants of 32 Battalion) having food and a roof over their heads was their main priority and they were grateful to be able to rebuild their lives. They were even able to go on holidays. As one can see above, their memories are shot through their experiences with family, friends and community as well as the access to resources such as the food rations and houses. They had reconstructed their ‘homes’ in Namibia with people that had the same historical background, same nationality and language.

The combatants were looked after in Buffalo: “...*food was normally quite good, by the standard of the army and the other camps I think but also we were looked after...there were movies now and again so it was quite good.*” When asked what films they would see, Cabinda said: “...*mostly the films that we saw were war movies...Second World War...so for us the mentality of war was always there...*”

Thus, the SADF gave them things that made them feel valued but it was controlled to avoid them questioning their situation, for example, the movies they saw at the community hall did not include the news. It is very important to understand and grasp that the social circumstances and difficulties that the ex-FNLA soldiers found themselves in in Angola, or the countries where they were living as refugees, ‘pushed’ them to join 32 Battalion. João Mucaba³³, during his interview in the *Missing Voices Project*, said, “...*we didn’t have another way because we had the enemy behind us and in front of us*”. The ‘enemy’ could be the Portuguese colony or UNITA/MPLA. Tia Trez and her parents left Angola and fled to Zaire (now the DRC), where she went to primary school, in mid-1961 as the violence between the Portuguese colony and the liberation movements intensified³⁴. In 1973, she went back to Angola with her husband in the belief that they would fight for the liberation of her country but in 1976 when the war intensified, she, her husband and other militants crossed the Okavango River to go into Namibia and stayed in Rundu with the other refugees.

³³ Born in Angola (Maquela do Zombo district) in 1960, was recruited by the FNLA in 1974 and participated in the *Missing Voices Project*.

³⁴ Although the Portuguese and liberation movements were always in conflict due to the forced labour and inhumane working conditions of the Angolans, the violence intensified in 1961 after revolts on coffee plantations broke out in March of that year. This led to massive deaths tolls: approximately 5 000 people died in January 1961 and in March, the Portuguese bombed Icolo, Bengo and Baia de Cassange which destroyed 17 villages and killed around 20 000 civilians.

Nevertheless, in 1978, her husband decided to go back to Zaire to see Holden Roberto (the leader of the FNLA) to see if he can assist in sending them back to Angola but that did not work out. Apparently, they took (I think she was referring to the rebels) his ticket and passport and until today, she has never again laid eyes on him. She continued, "*I stayed behind suffering with my daughter, my other children had stayed with our parents because of the war*". She said that she had no means of going back to Angola where her husband was after he handed himself back to the Angolan government because "...*he said he preferred to go back to his country and die than to die in a foreign country. I continued to live as a refugee with much suffering*". The term 'suffering' can indicate physical, emotional or mental pain.

The Angolan refugees were not only escaping the war in Angola but also starvation and required humanitarian assistance. Human Rights Watch had reported that many of the camps were in poor condition and many of its residents faced harassment by government forces, restrictions on free movement would either be subjected to physical assaults or forced conscription when found by either the MPLA or UNITA (Human Rights Watch Brief paper, 2002).

For Tia Trez the solution to her problems was to cohabite with a soldier: "*In 1980, I met a soldier. He came to ask if I would live with him. It was a very difficult decision, for the Angolans in Namibia; it was very difficult to get work. We did not have any studies or qualifications to enable us to get work. There were no jobs that we could do. There were garages, stores, the post office and the police station. I accepted that man's proposal, to go and live with him in Buffalo. This was in 1981. In 1984, I entered the armed service as a primary school teacher.*" The circumstances in which she found herself 'pushed' her (a married woman) into agreeing to cohabit with an employed combatant of 32 Battalion. She used this as an opportunity to improve her living conditions, which ultimately resulted in her getting a job as a teacher in the army, which she continued up until 1998 when she opted for *o pacote* (package).

The 27 years of war in Angola resulted in one-third of the Angolan population to be internally displaced while 435 000 left Angola and opted for refugee status abroad. "Villagers fled their homes and often spent days hiding in the surrounding *mata* (bush), living off wild fruit or roots, always on the move in an attempt to reach government-controlled areas where some assistance were available...UNITA also displaced entire villages, forbidding people to leave with their belongings and forcing them to survive in new locations, without clothes, food or medicines. Fleeing civilians sometimes travelled for weeks and over hundreds of kilometres before they reached relative safety. Some died along the way or only narrowly survived lack

of food, landmine injuries or disease” (Human Rights Watch Brief paper 2002:4). Moreover, because municipalities were often overcrowded, it negatively affected the health and welfare of the people living in the area. The soldiers forced the displaced to assist them in the search for food, since they were also suffering from hunger. It should also be mentioned that most of the displaced did not have identity documentation and were therefore harassed by the authorities and were often beaten or arrested by the police. The women and girls were more “vulnerable to assaults, including sexual violence, by policemen and soldiers located in road control posts when on their way to and from isolated agricultural areas or when collecting water” (Human Rights Watch Brief paper 2002:6).

In addition, the displaced (especially the children) often had challenges accessing social services without documentation. Thus, while people like Cabinda found themselves in Buffalo Base with their families, others, like Tia Trez, were separated from their husbands and families, which meant they had to find other ways to survive. However, most of the participants and ex-combatants I interviewed joined 32 Battalion because they have already been in the military as FNLA troops. Out of the eight ex-combatants I interviewed, six (75%) joined FNLA to protect their country and do away with the Portuguese.

The aim of this thesis is not to discuss the spoils or politics of the war or if 32 Battalion was right in fighting against ‘communism’ as explained by the SADF, it is rather to investigate the reasons as to why the ex-combatants and their families do not want to leave Pomfret. This thesis also has as an aim to unpack how the Angolan troops found themselves joining 32 Battalion. Michelle Moyd in *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (2014) writes about *askari* as professional soldiers who have been portrayed by African historians as traitors, collaborators and brutal supporters of the colonial state yet seen as loyal and obedient soldiers by the colonial apologists. She focuses on *askari* as fathers, husbands, heads of households and individual men with their personal goals and desires away from their jobs as professional soldiers. She argues that the *askaris* joined *Schutztruppe*³⁵ and became violent in order to become ‘big men’ in their *askari* villages where the *askari* lived with their dependents.

Moyd chronicles how these men became soldiers and played significant military and social roles and does not separate the African soldiers’ professional and personal lives because, to her, as “agents of everyday colonialism” they were not only in the battlefield but also did policing and administrative work which was crucial for the existence of the colonial state. Their profession as soldiers did not only give them spending power, which increased development in the micro-economies - attracting traders, local entrepreneurs and artisans,

³⁵ Refers to the official name given to African soldiers in the German colonial army and means protection force.

but it enabled them to achieve and maintain their status as 'big men' in their *askari* villages. In the case of the combatants of 32 Battalion, being a soldier in the SADF meant that they not only had salaries but they had houses and a community within which they could leave their families without fear. Their purchasing power meant they were able to support themselves and even go on holidays.

Although most of the ex-combatants argue that the only reason they joined 32 Battalion was to fight 'communism', this decision definitely improved their social conditions. Tio Hugo (an ex-FNLA troop) said: "*we decided to war against the Portuguese, we wanted war against the Portuguese colonizers because they colonized Angola for over 500 years under slavery and from then the pro-independence parties developed...but after that there was a civil war between the parties because they couldn't agree on who should take power.*" This meant that he would be separated from his family to go and fight for the liberation of his fellow Angolans.

One of the participants, Tio Unico, showed me his MPLA membership card, which he still keeps in his wallet.). He is the oldest of the participants (82 years old) and he was involved in both the anti-colonial and the civil war before he joined 32 Battalion. Before he became an FNLA troop, he was initially an MPLA troop before Holden Roberto took some troops with him to form the FNLA while the other troops joined the FNLA after its establishment. Tio Cuma claims that in the process of fighting for post-colonial power, the FNLA ran out of equipment and thus they requested South Africa's assistance and 32 Battalion was their way of returning to Angola to fight the enemy (the MPLA).

32 Battalion achieved its goals thanks to ex-troops and the troops would in return get 'value' in terms of financial benefits, which ultimately had a positive impact on their standard of living. Pai Grande said that life in Namibia was good: they were paid and had wooden houses and food, and free water from the river. He adds, "*when we had to go to the bushes, the family stayed behind at the kimbo and we would go for 1 to 2 months. The salary would increase when we would go to the bush.*" This was referred to as bush pay.

On the other hand people like Tio Men and Tio Calmo became troops mostly to provide for their families, the very family that he (Tio Men) has not seen over 20 years. Both were 26 years old when they became troops. Tio Men is a painter and Tio Calmo is an experienced carpenter. Tio Calmo says: "*...I was the one who decided because there was no way of finding something to eat so I decided to go help when they requested more people with the assumption that I was going back to the country*".

This statement shows that the Angolan civilians amid the Angolan war found themselves in very complicated and life-threatening circumstances that pushed them to search for

strategies to build their livelihood in neighbouring countries and drove them to dig deeper and make drastic decisions in order to survive. John Anderson who participated in the *Missing Voice Project* said:

“...and while we were still at Mavinga the first time...a lot of the troops saw some of their families in UNITA and we smuggled them back to Buffalo in our Buffels and gave them our camouflaged clothes and they became decent troops as well, they were recruits and later became troops in the unit again.” When asked if these troops were willing to abandon UNITA and join 32 Battalion, Anderson replied:

“oh yes, they wanted to get away because they didn’t have decent, well they had food but really not in big quantities and they really had a hard life because when we drove to operations they used to walk most of the way, they were really thin but hard kids if you can call them that...it was quite an eye opener...I remember one night we heard a shot and we went to go and have a look and it was one UNITA soldier who had stolen a rat pack and the Alufer³⁶ (the troops with rank in UNITA) as they would refer to him saw it and shot him and hit him in the leg...I feel for something like that really its...I mean the guy was hungry let him have his rat pack it’s not the enemy...the troops didn’t want to work with them.” The above extract from a story told by John Anderson is of particular significance because the story points to the fact that even the troops under UNITA, lacked basic supplies such as food to the extent that someone got shot for stealing a rat pack from a superior officer.

This again portrays the circumstances the troops found themselves in and how in these circumstances they would grab any opportunity, such as joining 32 Battalion, especially if basic needs would be provided for. The FNLA soldiers had little choice but to take up the offer. The South Africans offered them a home where they could take their families, salaries and food but also a chance to fight in the war again.

However, as Namibia was on the road to independence, 32 Battalion had to relocate in 1989 and the Angolans troops could not go back to their country of origin (Angola) as they had fought their fellow citizens and consequently, the SADF brought them to South Africa and relocated them to Pomfret, North West. In South Africa, the soldiers were requested to assist the police in dealing with violence in the townships and were deployed in various townships where the goal was achieved. On 8 April 1992, they were deployed in Phola Park and ended up using live ammunition against several civilians. Images of the deceased played all over South African television during a time of transition to a democratic South Africa. In order to

³⁶ Although written as alufer in the *Missing Voices Project’s* interview with John Anderson, I believe the correct term is Laufer, which in the German security services was used to refer to an official undercover agent often referred to as *V-Mann*. *V-Mann* is short for *Verbindungsmann* which emphasis the controlling service’s clandestine link in a targeted group (Turner 2017).

solve this, a commission of enquiry was ordered to investigate and the findings concluded that the 32 Battalion soldiers were guilty of the atrocities committed and disbanded on 26 March 1993.

At that time, the SADF became the SANDF and the former combatants were advised to either retire and take their severance packages or to be integrated into the new SANDF. One hundred ninety men were sent to 2SAI while some went to 5 Reconnaissance Regiment but these men were approximately 1 000 km away from their families and those whose unit was stationed in Phalaborwa were not given accommodation. In addition, the lack of proper planning resulted in most former combatants returning to Pomfret and by the end of 1994 only 300 former combatants were still serving in the SANDF and while some were relieved to work in 2 SAI when it moved to Pomfret on 1 July 1993, the others had already received their severance packages. When 2 SAI moved to Zeerust in 1998 due to the asbestos contamination in Pomfret, more former members of 32 Battalion retired. Since then conditions in Pomfret have worsened: there is currently no electricity, no clinic and only once a week water for a few hours. Nonetheless, despite the governments' efforts to relocate the residents of Pomfret to Mafikeng, the remaining ex-combatants and their families do not want to leave Pomfret. Therefore, in the next section we unpack the reasons the residents of Pomfret are unwilling to relocate.

4.4 “THOSE WHO BROUGHT ME HERE MUST TAKE ME...”

Relocation is not a new concept to the members of 32 Battalion and their families. They left their homeland (Angola) to escape to refugee camps before settling in Buffalo Base, Namibia “but the proposed move to South Africa was an entirely different prospect and would demand not only physical removal from the place that had been ‘home’ for more than a decade, but mental and cultural adjustments to an entirely new way of life” (Nortje 2003:255). Yet relocation to South Africa was inevitable.

SWA was by March 1989 in the process of becoming independent and due to their alliance with the SADF, the former FNLA soldiers could not go back to Angola. Kobus Mostert (a former lieutenant of 32 Battalion) said during his interview with the *Missing Voices Project* that “...a lot of them were excited...because they were going to South Africa, the promised land. And I think it was such a big eye opener...look where they are now...they are left behind, it's a regime, it's the government that doesn't give a shit”.

When Cabinda was questioned about how she felt when she was first told about the relocation to South Africa she stated: “You know in a way excited way...you know...you were staying in Namibia...and then South Africa was seen as this very big...nice country where you, where you had everything...You used to hear about Johannesburg...and about

Pretoria and about this soccer stars...soccer teams that...media was very limited...we were at least excited...now we are going to place you know...when they tell you, you are going to have houses made of bricks...you are going to have electricity...you going to have a very nice school...this excitement is building...you want to know where am I going?"

Accordingly, on 1 May 1989 the ex-combatants and their families packed all their belongings, said good-bye to their Namibian friends and got onto the busses to Grootfontein, from there they got onto trains (passing through De Aar and Kimberley on to Vryburg). In Vryburg, they took local busses to Pomfret. Unfortunately, houses were only given to those whose names were already on the SADF's list and the rest had to live in tents until their houses were completed and they could move in. Three schools were built: Educar (with instruction in English and Afrikaans from grade 1 to grade 4, Pomfret Primary (specifically for white Afrikaans speaking pupils) and Pica Pau (with instruction in English from grade 5 to grade 12). The teachers came from Buffalo Base, but the Department of Education provided more educators as well as textbooks. Pomfret also had sports facilities, churches and all fresh products such as meat and milk were bought from the farmers surrounding Pomfret. During my interviews, most of the participants reminisced about how beautiful Pomfret was when they arrived. They mentioned that there was a swimming pool, a community hall, running water, electricity; life was good until 2 SAI moved away in 1998, and Pomfret was handed over to the Department of Public Works. Some of those who did their national service and left prior to the relocation of 32 Battalion were very disappointed that 32 Battalion was relocated to Pomfret. Eon (a former path finder³⁷ of 32 Battalion) said during his *Missing Voices Project* interview "...I wasn't happy with the fact they went to Pomfret even though I wasn't involved...they could have possibly gone to a better place but I don't know of any place like that, but they might have constructed a camp with a better place than Pomfret".

Brigadier Nelius (Second in command of all troops in Namibia) agreed and added that, "*I was dead against Pomfret myself, I wanted some other place but okay, I was not in a position to demand, I could just give my opinion. I was disgusted when I saw Pomfret*".

They do not go into detail as to why they did not approve of Pomfret for the relocation of the ex-combatants and their families, neither did Nelius explain what made him "*disgusted*" when he saw Pomfret. One can only imagine that he was referring to the conditions prior to it being renovated because according to Nortje (2003:274) Commandant Robbie Hartslief, Captain Martin Geldenhuys and Foxtrot Company had travelled to Pomfret "to pave the way

³⁷ A pathfinder is a soldier that is specialized in navigating their way through the terrain and establishing safe landing zones for aircraft.

for the rest of the battalion and their dependents. What they found was a ghost town, overgrown with weeds and waist-high grass, the buildings sadly in need of maintenance, the roads barely visible”.

The reason the SADF choose Pomfret, according to Nelius, is that they (the leaders of 32 Battalion) “...*wanted a place where they could be isolated, bringing them back...the politics weren't so very good at this stage...we didn't want them to be hurt, to put them in any place you could have had lot of problems, so you had to put them where they were actually isolated and not near a place where you could get...other people getting there easily and do damage...find a place big enough to accommodate over five thousand people...you had to give them a school, had to give them shops, had to give them the medical so you had to look at something, some or other infrastructure places like old schools, military bases, mines...that was for sale. And it (Pomfret) gave most answers that we wanted but what we didn't know was that there wasn't enough water...I don't think our engineers did that study well enough to establish that but it is where we stayed...we caused the problems ourselves*”.

This statement is so strong not only because Nelius acknowledges that they (and their engineers) were negligent in choosing Pomfret, without a proper feasibility study, as a base for the combatants and their families, but it also concludes that the SADF played a significant role in the lack of social services, such as water, that Pomfret residents are currently facing. Therefore, one can argue that the difficulties that the Angolan ex-combatants of 32 Battalion are currently facing have multiple causes. It was the SADF that recruited the troops and turned them into full-force brutal soldiers (in the FNLA they were just ordinary troops fighting for the liberation of their country). Oppie Opperman (Chaplain for 15 years in the Defence Force) argued during his interview for the *Missing Voices Project* that a 32 Battalion soldier “...*is the tool and he obeys the order he is given and they are...they did what they had to do, they were obedient soldiers...judge the soldier by his work*”.

The SADF knew of the politics surrounding 32 Battalion, as Oppie Opperman stated, “...*they (the former Angolan combatants of 32 Battalion) betrayed the black people because they worked for the whites*”. But more than that they betrayed their own country, they betrayed Namibians and South Africans all in return for shelter, food and everything else that they had lost during the liberation war in Angola. Currently, the conditions the ex-combatants and their families find themselves in Pomfret, is far from what they had expected to experience in the promised land: water is supplied only once a week, there has been no electricity since 2014, there is no police station and rarely any transport, or if you are lucky and find a taxi, you have to pay at least R120 (in 2016) for a trip to Zeerust. "The biggest challenge for Pomfret is that it's 200 kilometres (124 miles) from the first city" (News24, 2017). Moreover, "there's

no economy...most of the shops have closed and buildings have been destroyed to prevent people from staying there” (News24 2017). And yet, the ex-combatants are adamant that they will not leave Pomfret.

When I asked Tio Thomas why he wants to remain in Pomfret, he replied, “*here, it is a good situation because we know each other, we know how to help each other even though there are arguments there and there but there is always assistance. When you need a bit of salt, you go to the neighbour and he will give you the salt. Mealie meal, if the pap isn't as ready as it should and it's short of a bit of mealie meal, you go to the neighbour and he will give it to you so you can finish with the pap whereas 'outside' is not like that, to tell the truth those that live outside, there is nothing like that. There is each one for themselves and God for everyone. But us here, we know how to support each other and we know that we are all suffering.*” According to Tio Thomas, they do not just share a historical background, they ‘know each other’. They (the Angolan residents of Pomfret) have lived with each other in Buffalo Base, and because of that, they understand and sympathise with each other’s challenges and thus assist each other where possible, such as sharing salt and maize meal. The ex-combatants are afraid that wherever they will be relocated to, there will not be this kind of mutual support. This is the reason that he would rather stay in Pomfret than relocate, he is aware that should he run out of something as simple as salt, he can ask for assistance from the neighbour and it will be given to him. The Pomfret community have established very strong bonds, whether because of their shared experiences or nationalities, they consider themselves family. This is the social aspect that Lewicka (2008) refers to when the participant does not want to let go of social relationships; he has established ‘beneficial’ relationships that play positive roles in his life. He has become accustomed to the way of life within the community as these are the people that he has shared historical experiences with and with whom he feels secure. He is not only in his comfort zone but he feels protected. In addition, he is familiar with Pomfret and is afraid of the uncertainty of the unknown ‘outside’ world.

Pai Grande added “*...I am used to living here and I like staying here*”. I remember speaking to Tia Dois who got emotional when talking about her family; she lost contact with her family in Angola, and therefore her only family now are the immediate family members and the friends she has made in Pomfret.

The first day we arrived, we did not find the people in their respective houses, and after wandering around, we were told that they were in the cemetery. When we got there, it was a group of men and women - some with machetes, others with hoes cutting the grass and others with rakes collecting the cut grass. They have decided to clean the cemetery. One

can see that besides the willingness of assisting each other and caring about the wellbeing of Pomfret, they also care about the people who lived and died in Pomfret.

As I was walking in the streets in Pomfret, I felt like I was back home in Angola: the kizomba music (a popular music genre originating from Angola), the noise of children playing in the streets speaking Portuguese, the adults communicating in *Umbundu*, people transporting water. The only things that were missing were the traffic and the smell of garlic for one to complete the Angolan atmosphere. It is not surprising that one would feel reluctant to leave this atmosphere. Besides the sense of community, since their arrival in 1989, Pomfret became their *kimbo* (village). This brings out the distinctiveness of Pomfret: the togetherness that the community has established to such an extent that they consider each other family and assist each other where possible. They have been through the most difficult stages of their lives together.

However, others want to remain within Pomfret because they see the houses are their reward for all the years of hard work for the SADF. When asked, why he does not want to leave Pomfret, Tio Thomas said:

“The reason is; I have worked so many years in the military. I cannot leave something that I have suffered for and give it to someone who did not do anything. You see, for me to have this house it is because of the work that I have done, the white man was clear that this place belongs to you guys of your own money if you let someone take it away from you, that is your own problem and it does not have anything to do with us. Because this place we have made it for you all, your children and grandchildren you see but after that, we are all here, we Angolans are all the same...that is the reason I do not want to leave Pomfret because it is my sweat, I have to use this sweat until it finishes...we should have rights to water, electricity and houses all free from the things that we have already done in Namibia, you see. That is our payment.”

Taking into consideration the historical background of Pomfret and how the participants became inhabitants of it, it is not surprising for him to make such a strong statement. However, based on this statement, it does not seem that he is only attached to the place due to its historical past and his determination to ensure its continuity but rather that he feels entitled to Pomfret. Lewicka (2008) refers to the fact that when an individual is aware of the history of his residence he/she will be more emotionally attached in comparison to someone who is unaware of its history, however, it does not touch on the issue of entitlement. The entitlement that the above participant expresses is common among the veterans, to them the houses and Pomfret are forms of repayment for all their hard work and dedication to the military and specifically their dedication to 32 Battalion.

The houses and Pomfret are the rewards for their 'suor' (sweat). Tio Thomas does not want only to remain in Pomfret because he sees it as a historical place of importance his self-esteem, but it is also a place where he can achieve his goals. Pomfret and the houses are seen as a symbol of his dedication to 32 Battalion.

He (Tio Thomas) is also referring to the distinctiveness of Pomfret; the fact that it was given to them as a sign of the SADF's gratitude for their dedication and commitment and therefore it is not surprising that he is reluctant to leave something that he feels rightly belongs to him. Pomfret itself belongs to them, and therefore, it will be passed to their children and grandchildren to ensure the continuity of Pomfret. It is the only thing left as a sign of their roots and where they have been.

Relocation for them is out of the question, and they feel entitled to all basic needs such as water, electricity and houses, not because of their South African citizenships, but for the years of service, they have dedicated to South Africa's Defence Force. Tio KK adds "*I really like Pomfret, I cannot leave Pomfret to go where...the house was given to me by the government and the military and I don't have money what am I going to do in another place*". Thus, the participants are afraid of the unfamiliar, they have only known Pomfret since their arrival in South Africa. But more than that, they may also be afraid of being seen and treated like *impimpi/askari* by most of the South African black population. As I interacted with some of the veterans' children, who are now in their 30s and 40s, I learnt that some do not ever mention to their South African friends that they are Angolans from Pomfret, North West out of fear that their South African friends will discover their connection to 32 Battalion and its history.

Tio KK said, "*...I like the houses because we remain in the same place, because we don't have anywhere else to go, we don't know any other place, we don't know the doctrines of the country*".

As Lewicka (2008) argues, the participants seem to not only be attached to Pomfret but they can identify with the place itself thus the familiarly. Their houses although ancient, are spacious with three or four bedrooms excluding the kitchen and the living room. They are accustomed to this size house. I remember that one of the participants (Tio Men) mentioned in passing that the asbestos mine has always been there and that for them is not reason enough to relocate. In addition to that, should relocation be an alternative for them, they want the government to ensure that their new homes will be similar in size to their current houses in Pomfret. Tio Hugo said: "*If the government says that from today Hugo has a house, in this place, I will accept because they will give me a house with conditions because I cannot just be removed from this house and be put in a house without conditions, for*

example; I have families and now they give me a house with 2 rooms and I have 8 children; how am I going to survive in a house with 2 rooms? I cannot because I have a family unless they guarantee me a house where my family and I can fit with my 8 or 9 family members that are with me...a visitor can come and I must have accommodation for the visitor that is better whereas 2 rooms with 8 family members where are the rest going to sleep. Myself, as a father, I will sleep in 1 room and the other children will sleep in the other room and the older ones? There is no space for them” However, there is more to Pomfret than just the houses and the bonds the participants have created. Others like Pai Grande and Tio Men do not want to leave due to the cemetery “...we have families here, the cemetery and the deceased, it’s a lot of people that are there therefore I like Pomfret because I am already used to live here and I like staying here”. Tio Men further expressed his fear of relocation “... I cannot imagine it. To go to suffer more and leave the cemetery, our families died here, I have abandoned the cemetery in Buffalo and I will abandon the cemetery here again our families died here, I have to die here”

It is not just about the relocation for him, it is about leaving his deceased family behind again after he has already abandoned others in Buffalo Base; it might not make sense to some but he cannot imagine leaving his family’s remains behind. Lewicka (2008) talks about the physical features and the symbolic meanings that play a significant role in place attachment. Even though the cemetery is a physical feature, it is the place where their relatives and families were laid to rest and therefore it makes sense that they do not want to leave ‘them’ behind. In Buffalo Base, they already had to abandon everything they had built and constructed, including the cemetery. The cemetery is a symbolic place: it is where the deceased are resting and where the remains of the families were laid to rest.

Tio Men wants to die in Pomfret because he worked hard for the SADF and he wants to be buried in the same soil as his family. He explains, “*I like Pomfret, I am liking Pomfret. This area is mine, when we left Namibia, we stopped here and I have never left or stopped anywhere else. I am from here in Pomfret. They have to kill me in this house to finish with the problem. That’s all I want*”.

I sympathised with each of the reasons given for resisting relocation, especially by taking into consideration the historical background of the participants and Pomfret. It is not surprising that they feel more at home in Pomfret than in Angola, now an unfamiliar place to them. They have accepted the consequences of their actions and the only hope they have is to protect the only thing that they feel belongs to them and reminds them of their roots: Pomfret. One must understand that the sense of community amongst the ex-combatants, their families and countrymen began in Buffalo Base, Namibia. Nelius emphasised that they

built a community out of a refugee camp and military people. They had a community hall that was used for weddings but also announcements and meetings. Cabinda stated, “...*when people went out to fight ...and sometimes it was difficult for them to announce...you know they would just see...they would go to the notice board...and make an announcement...sometimes the announcement would be...no there where three injured there...and five dead...*”

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter looked at the conditions that Angolan civilians found themselves in and which ultimately ‘pushed’ them to join 32 Battalion in Namibia with the objective of bettering their living conditions. Subsequent to joining 32 Battalion, they received houses, food rations and monthly salaries. However, as Namibia was set to achieve independence and they could not return to Angola as they fought their own countrymen, in 1989 the Angolan troops were moved to Pomfret. The SADF argued that the reason for choosing Pomfret was to isolate the veterans and their families in order to protect them from possible retaliation following the controversy that surrounded 32 Battalion. However, although they had good intentions and had ensured that Pomfret was in a good condition in terms of facilities and the houses provided, today the residents are living in unacceptable conditions without social services and the constant fear of relocation by the current government due to the health risks posed by the nearby asbestos mine. In addition to its remoteness, Pomfret does not have shops, a mortuary or hospitals even though the nearest city is 215km away. The young people have to migrate in search of job opportunities.

The ex-combatants want to remain in Pomfret mainly because of the sense of community and familiarity they have developed with each other and their town. Additionally, they are afraid that the houses that they will be relocated to will not be as spacious as the ones in Pomfret and will therefore not be able to accommodate their families. On top of that, they are unwilling to leave the cemetery behind. The ex-combatants and their families are comfortable, safe and familiar with Pomfret; they feel at ‘home’ in Pomfret. They have created a ‘community’ out of strangers: they did not know each other prior to their stay in Namibia, but now they have developed bonds with each other based on shared experiences.

The ex-combatants were victims of the war and the only difference between them and the Angolans who stayed behind in Angola to face starvation and the daily peril of an estimated 70 000 landmines, is that Jan Breytenbach recruited them and offered them a new life in South Africa.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The colonisation of Angola meant that “Angolan people were dispossessed of their land and forced into contract labour under harsh conditions” (Makidi-Ku-Ntima 1983 in Ngongo 2012:4) in addition to having to endure racism and inequality. The FNLA, UNITA and MPLA were formed in the hope that once colonial powers were defeated, there would be an improvement in the living conditions of Angolans. Although some became soldiers to provide for their families, many Angolan citizens (as some of the participants acknowledged in the above chapters) joined these liberation movements to overthrow the coloniser.

Throughout the liberation struggle, the FNLA, UNITA and MPLA were involved in violent hostilities amongst themselves because of the struggle for post-independence power (to the extent that atrocities were committed against citizens as discussed in chapter 2). The citizens had to find alternatives not only to survive but also to secure their livelihoods, and as a result, many migrated to different countries such as Zambia and Namibia. The participants in this study were former members of FNLA and found themselves in Mpupa, Namibia when they were defeated and pushed out of Luanda. Without a leader (he had ‘disappeared’) and no military assistance, 32 Battalion, as discussed in chapter 3, provided access to basic needs. In Namibia, 32 Battalion, through the SADF, ensured that their soldiers were well provided for. Therefore, Jacob Dlamini and Michelle Moyd are right in saying that we cannot characterise African soldiers who fought on the side of the colonial powers against their compatriots simply as traitors, collaborators and brutal henchmen of a colonial state or as loyal and obedient servants in the colonial army without unpacking their social, economic and political circumstances. The Angolan veterans of 32 Battalion were in a foreign country (Namibia), with little or no formal education, could not go back to Angola due to the war, and needed to find ways to fend for themselves and their families.

During the liberation war, Angolans had to find survival strategies, such as joining anti-colonial movements, in the hope that this would improve their social and economic situations. However, that did not always work to their advantage as they were often maltreated and many women were harassed by UNITA, MPLA, FAA and PNA troops. Therefore, fleeing the country seemed to be the way out. According to my research findings, many of the participants joined liberation movements to overthrow the Portuguese government while others like Tio Men and Tio Thomas joined the military to provide for their families. However, after the signing of the Alvor Agreement in January 1975, the violence between FNLA, UNITA and MPLA intensified. When China stopped providing military aid to UNITA and FNLA, both parties were pushed out of Luanda by the MPLA aided by Cuban

forces. FNLA soldiers consequently found themselves at the Namibian border without shelter or employment.

My research has shown that 32 Battalion provided a way out of this predicament. Through joining the unit, the ex FNLA soldiers I had interviewed were able to secure payment, housing and food rations, which enabled these men to provide for their families. This resonates with work by scholars such as Moyd and Dlamini, who both argue that so-called Askaris are more complex than the pervading collaborator/traitor versus loyal soldier binary leads many to believe.

Additionally, I have looked at the concept of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration to understand the process the SADF followed in order to effectively ensure that the former combatants were properly integrated into the community after the disbandment of the unit in 1993. Although there were programs in place to ensure this, none of my research participants confirmed it. They were paid their severance packages and no programs were put in place to assist them in making financial choices for example.

Furthermore, migration literature was used in order to understand the reasons that the residents do not want to be relocated. I found that the participants do not want to relocate based on various reasons such as the bond developed with one another over the years (social relationships) and because of this, they help each other in difficult times; familiarity with Pomfret and fear of the unknown (wherever they might be relocated to); they do not want to abandon once more those who are buried (cemetery). They have developed a sense of community amongst themselves and can speak their ethnic languages to one another. Some of the participants like Tio Thomas does not want to relocate because he feels entitled to the house as he believes that he worked for it.

Lastly, I have explored the livelihoods of the ex-combatants within Pomfret since 1993 by making use of the Sustainable Livelihood Approach. I found that although participants have different assets, the Pomfret residents are mostly concerned with finding strategies to secure their daily basic needs because they have limited resources to secure their future. Ninety per cent of the participants are more than 60 years old and are no longer working age. While Pai Grande worked as a supervisor after the unit disbanded, four of the ex-combatants interviewed worked as security guards and the others never worked. Currently, most are surviving on pension after they have depleted their severance payouts. Others, like Tio Thomas, supplement their pensions by fixing sofas, chairs etc. within the community for extra money. The ex-combatants have very limited primary education and as such most of them could only find employment within the security industry. Although people make donations to assist the Pomfret residents, they cannot depend on it as donations cannot

always be relied on. Unfortunately, in Pomfret, natural and physical capital is virtually non-existent.

The residents of Pomfret live in uncertainty because, since 2005, the South African government has been threatening to relocate them and close down the town. Once again, they fear dispossession of the land that they feel is their own. They do not want to abandon their cemeteries and move away from their own people, who speak the same language, have the same history, and share their struggle for survival. As a result of the war in Angola and subsequent migration, the veterans were separated from their immediate families (mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters and some husbands/wives) but established their own families (got married and had children) and established 'familial' bonds with other veterans in Namibia and more recently in Pomfret where they help one another in times of need. It is understandable that they are reluctant to leave.

However, the question remains for how long they will be able to survive without social services, relying only on their pensions and child support grants to put bread on their tables.

The situation in which ex-combatants find themselves in Pomfret also begs questions about the role of the government and of policy implications. Pomfret is without any basic services, which are the rights of all South African citizens. These basic needs must be provided because the government's neglect of the community's needs is a violation of the rights of the residents. The government has tried to correct this by committing itself, through Cabinet, to relocate the Pomfret residents to secure areas between 2005 and 2008 due to the hazardousness of the re-emergence of the asbestos contamination. However, to date the relocation has not taken place. Based on the views expressed by participants in this study, they were not willing to relocate due in part to a lack of communication between government officials and residents. The Diagnostic Evaluation of the Implementation of the Pomfret Rehabilitation and Relocation Project Report (2017) concurs with this and adds that there was also poor planning and coordination as well as inadequate resource allocation. Moreover, for the former Pomfret residents who were relocated, there was no post-relocation evaluation. Even though the government prioritises the relocation of the Pomfret residents, there is a court interdict that prohibits this from happening and therefore this must be dealt with before any further relocation intervention in Pomfret can take place.

According to the Diagnostic Evaluation of the Implementation of the Pomfret Rehabilitation and Relocation Project Report (2017), the inadequate services and the dangers associated with asbestos in Pomfret make "the place not conducive for human habitation" (Diagnostic Evaluation of the Implementation of the Pomfret Rehabilitation and Relocation Project Report 2017:5).

This, therefore, means that the government is in violation of section 2 of the South African Constitution, which stipulates that every citizen has the right to a safe and clean environment for health-related reasons. The fact that there is asbestos contamination in Pomfret means that the environment is not safe or clean.

Moreover, letting the Pomfret residents stay within such an environment is a serious violation of their basic constitutional rights and it seems only fair that the government looks at implementing policies to remedy this situation. Seeing that an asbestos rehabilitation program was already initiated in Pomfret in 1989, and failing relocation, it seems feasible that the government can work towards ensuring that the rehabilitation program is regularly maintained. However, although the South African Occupational Health and Safety Act deals with the regulation of asbestos mine and the safety measures to deal with asbestos contamination, it fails to provide guidelines of the way to deal with people residing close to asbestos areas.

Due to the fact that South Africa currently has no legislation that addresses how relocation should be carried out (if indeed it is to be carried out) and there are no clear guidelines that stipulate how to deal with people living in close proximity of asbestos, I will make some recommendations that could be put in place by the government to deal with possible relocation and that will favour the Pomfret residents:

- The government is to engage with the Pomfret community to make them understand the reasons for the relocation, where they will be relocated to and the implications of such a relocation. The participants raised the issue that the government does not engage with them on the subject of relocation, therefore, they (the ex-combatants) are not aware of where they are relocating to and the reasons behind the relocation. They (the ex-combatants and their families) are of the opinion that the relocation is due to the asbestos and it does not make sense to them because the asbestos has always been there, why has the government only recently become concerned about their health? In addition, the stakeholders must also highlight the benefits of relocating.
- In the light of the social, economic challenges and the limited service provision to Pomfret residents, the solution (as also suggested by the Diagnostic Evaluation of the Implementation of the Pomfret Rehabilitation and Relocation Project Report 2017) would be to relocate the population to Mahikeng, Vryburg and Tosca. This will be ideal as the government can take advantage of the existing coherence and

resources in these communities. Moreover, this will ensure that the Pomfret residents leave the hazardous zone to a healthier environment.

However, it is important to emphasise that in order for relocation to succeed, there has to be sufficient planning designed and implemented accordingly.

- The majority of the residents in Pomfret are elderly and fragile because of illnesses or health-related issues such as stroke and diabetes, and it is, therefore, a necessity to ensure that the new environment is conducive to their wellbeing. According to the Diagnostic Evaluation of the Implementation of the Pomfret Rehabilitation and Relocation Project Report (2017), a significant number of Pomfret residents suffer from asbestos-related diseases which require them to be close to health facilities. Therefore, the new environment must enable the residents to have access to basic needs such as sanitation, electricity, water and health facilities.
- Due to not knowing how the government plans to go about the relocation issue as raised by the participants, there is a necessity for an in-depth sensitisation of the community in Pomfret for an explicit understanding of the intervention (relocation) and benefits. This should include the receiving community and it will ensure public participation and social facilitation.
- 32 Battalion Veterans Association should assist the government and veterans by ensuring that they are registered to receive military veterans' grants. The grants will be a 50% increase on their current pension. This will also allow their youngest children the opportunity to pursue tertiary education with the assistance of the government.
- Relocation or some other form of intervention from the government is desperately needed, as the houses in Pomfret are old and recently (Friday, 23 February 2018) I was sent pictures of how houses were destroyed by the rain (Appendix C).
- After the relocation, the residents must receive post-relocation support to ensure that the ex-combatants and their families are well integrated into their new surroundings. For example, engaging with the newly relocated residents to find out if they are satisfied or if they have any issues regarding their new environment.

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