

We know who, but we don't know how

The Namibian elections are over but for Namibia's first constituent assembly an even more important time lies ahead. **SUSAN BROWN** and **DAVID NIDDRIE** look at the major areas of debate.

If the election results announced on November 14 defined who will exercise power in Namibia, the weeks ahead will define the nature of that power.

Conditions set out by the major Western powers in 1982 as a post-script to Resolution 435 (and agreed to by Swapo and South Africa) sketch in broad outline the shape of an independent Namibian society: it will be a multi-party democracy operating in terms of a constitution which includes a bill of rights, and with an independent judiciary empowered to defend the constitution against the passage of any laws which contradict it.

Guarantees of 'just compensation' for any nationalisation ensures that it will, at most, have an economic mix of state and private enterprises.

In the first Namibian constituent assembly, in which Swapo has 41 of the 72 seats - a straight majority but seven seats short of the two-thirds which must approve any decisions - the major areas of debate will be over the nature of limits placed on government power.

The seven parties represented in the assembly may well be genuine in their desire for reconciliation. But in the wake of a bloody, 20-year guerilla war which claimed the lives of just over 1% of the population, caution is understandable. The smaller parties in particular are keen to avoid being subjected to unlimited government power.

One of the key issues for debate



A Swapo supporter celebrates the outcome of Namibia's elections

will therefore be how a government is formed - whether Namibia holds to the proportional representation under which the constituent assembly elections were held, or moves towards a first-past-the-post constituency system such as exists in (white parliamentary) South Africa and in Britain. Under the latter, Swapo would almost certainly massively increase its representation. The minority parties will thus fight to retain proportional representation. The

choice is less vital for Swapo, which retains its majority whichever way the electoral cake is sliced.

A precise definition of the circumstances in which a government is dissolved and the country elects a new one is, for the minority parties, an even more crucial issue: they cannot afford to approve a constitution which allows a powerful executive to continue running the country if and when the ruling party's control of parliament is suc-

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Queueing to vote: Namibians stood for hours to vote in the UN-monitored elections

cessfully challenged.

The independence of the courts - through the process of appointing judges - and the courts' power to reject legislation running counter to the constitution is a further vital element for the smaller parties and for many within Swapo.

Another key debate is the make-up and accountability of the police and armed forces.

Pretoria also recognises the central importance of this. Thus administrator-general Louis Pienaar, while establishing a liaison committee as a channel between his bureaucracy and Swapo, is simultaneously preparing to recruit 2 000 new policemen for the Namibian police force - Swapol.

For precisely the same motives, Swapo's Sam Nujoma is seeking a commission to examine the suitability of currently-serving Swapol members for a post-independence national army and police force. He has already indicated his preference for an army and police force based almost exclusively on veterans of Swapo's People's Liberation Army of Namibia (Plan).

Most opposition parties are understandably cautious about this - particularly the United Democratic Front (UDF), with its strong contingent of former Swapo members detained by the liberation movement's security services in a series of purges over the



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past decade.

The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) also has a vested interest in the issue: majority of Swapo members and former soldiers of the SWATF army are DTA supporters.

These are, however, largely political considerations: jockeying to ensure maximum influence in Namibia's forces. But there are also entirely pragmatic arguments for including these people in independent Namibia's police and military. Excluded, these highly-trained men whose only real skill is to wage war and to kill will be ideal recruitment material for any external interests intent on creating a Namibian equivalent to Unita. Inside Namibia's nation forces, and with regular salaries paid by the new government, their loyalty to Namibia can be wooed and possibly won.

All the parties are agreed on the need for a mixed economy, for a food self-sufficiency programme, for diversification from the present reliance on the primary sector, and for major financial, marketing and training support for the communal rural areas.

Nationalisation of farming land and of some multinational companies have

in the past been the main issues of economic debate. Swapo's most recent authoritative statement comes from economic affairs secretary Ben Amathila, who said only unused freehold land would be the target for resettlement.

The line is thus: justice is the guiding principle, but food and jobs are what we need right now.

Nationalisation of multinational mining investment was also out, Amathila said; a Swapo government would pressure such companies to put financial, technological and skills resources into the country, but would steer clear of conventional nationalisation which would scare off the foreign investment Namibia urgently needs.

A second point of agreement is the need to move cautiously towards less dependence on South Africa.

Similarly, as part of the Rand Monetary Area, Namibia's finances are entirely entwined with South Africa's. The R200-million generated in Namibia every three months from pensions, insurance and mining income as potential investment capital does not sit in Namibia waiting to be used. It

goes to where the capital markets - and thus greater profits - are, in Johannesburg.

With no central bank and no currency of its own, there is nothing Namibia can do to stop this. Nor, the parties agree, will it be wise to do so as soon as they have the power to. Closing the door would do no more than trap ever-increasing quantities of idle capital in Namibia, feeding inflation.

In these terms, there is a priority in finding somewhere for that capital to put itself to work - the establishment of productive industry.

Import substitution, however, is not the ideal strategy: a country with just 1,5-million people cannot produce in the kind of quantity to make it competitive with South African products.

The key to all this, however, is clearly Swapo. The movement's hardliners - 'Stalinists' to their critics - have dominated structures in exile for the past decade. But their influence has steadily weakened since the return of the exiles, which critically diminished the massive power exercised by the movement's security police - thus limiting their ability to silence critics and limit debate.

It is hard to give those gaining ground in the party a label: 'pragmatists' doesn't really describe it. But they are increasingly in touch with reality, both domestic and international.

Those of them in the returned leadership, for example, quickly learned to abandon the autocratic modes of exile in favour of listening to and working with Swapo's internal structures.

A crucial indicator of the fortunes of democracy and accountability inside Swapo will be whether a party congress is held to elect a leadership and define policy - the last was held in 1973.

If the choice is against such a congress - and the hardliners oppose it - Swapo seats in the constituent assembly and later in parliament will, by default, become the site where policies are formulated and leadership is exercised in practice.

If this is the case the hardliners - markedly under-represented among Swapo's 41 representatives - will battle to retain their influence.

Namibia's minority parties

* **ACN (Action Christian National):** Its core is the National Party which ran Namibia before 1978. Support comes mainly from white Afrikaans- and German-speakers - rightwing farmers, bureaucrats, small traders and artisans. 3 seats;

* **DTA (Democratic Turnhalle Alliance):** Represents most of Namibia's 100 000 white citizens, as well as traditional leaders and their constituents in several areas, plus a number of upwardly mobile black Namibians, both urban and rural. Outside Ovamboland, its support levels are only fractionally lower than Swapo's. The party was started with South African backing. 21 seats;

* **FCN (Federal Convention of Namibia):** An erratic grouping whose main policy aim is the establishment of a 'land bridge' between the Rehoboth homeland near Windhoek and the South African-run port of Walvis Bay. The party has several times threatened 'UDI' by Rehoboths. 1 seat;

* **NNF (Namibian National Front):** Social democratic party centred on a faction of Swanu, oldest of the Namibian nationalist groupings and at different times a real rival and an ally of Swapo. 1 seat;

NPF (Namibian Patriotic Front): Centrist, also Swanu faction-based. 1 seat;

UDF (United Democratic Front): No relation to the South African movement of the same name, the front is an alliance of small factions which had few prospects until it was joined in August by the Patriotic Unity Movement (PUM), formed by Swapo ex-detainees. It holds similar political positions to Swapo, although PUM repudiates Swapo's 'autocratic and tyrannical leadership'. 4 seats.