

DIPLOMACY IN ARMED STRUGGLE: A CASE OF THE SOUTH WEST

AFRICA PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION (SWAPO)

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SAIMA NAKUTI ASHIPALA

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THESIS SUPERVISOR: PROF. CHRISTO BOTHA

FIRST EXAMINER: DR. JEREMY SILVESTER

EXTERNAL EXAMINER: PROF. CHRISTOPHER SAUNDERS

## **Abstract**

The end of the Second World War witnessed the establishment of the United Nations Organisation and with it a wave of decolonisation over former colonies and mandated territories. The South African regime, however, refused to recognise the organisation especially with regards to the territory of South West Africa which South Africa wanted to annex and turn it into its fifth province. The South African racial policy and attempts at annexation led to uprisings within the territory of South West Africa/Namibia and the formation of nationalist movements in the 1950s and the 1960s. One such movement was the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) which was established in 1960 in opposition to South African rule. SWAPO adopted a three-pronged strategy with the aim of liberating Namibia from South African rule and this strategy included the political mobilisation of the people of South West Africa, a diplomatic offensive and armed struggle. SWAPO's diplomatic offensive began with petitions brought, through various means, before the United Nations. Over the years, the targets of SWAPO's diplomatic campaign diversified with continental and international organisations as well as individual nations being approached for diverse reasons and objectives. The main purpose of this research was thus to illustrate the importance of the diplomatic offensive embarked on by SWAPO in its struggle for the liberation of Namibia. The importance and relevance of the diplomatic campaign to liberate Namibia is often not valued for two reasons: firstly, the role played by Namibians in the diplomatic

campaign to liberate Namibia is often ignored in accounts of international diplomacy on the question of Namibia. Secondly, the current political rhetoric on the liberation struggle for Namibia is mostly focused on the armed struggle component of the strategy without taking into account the diplomatic offensive which facilitated the armed struggle.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgement.....	vi
Dedication .....	vii
Declarations.....	viii
Chapter One – Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background: South West Africa the colony.....	3
1.2.1 League of Nations Mandate .....	3
1.2.2 South West Africa under South African Rule .....	4
1.2.3 The United Nations .....	6
1.3 Orientation of the study.....	7
1.4 Relevance of the research.....	9
1.5 Research Objective(s) .....	10
1.6 Overview of the study .....	11
Chapter Two – Literature Review .....	12
2.1 Nationalism and the rise of Nationalist Movements .....	14
2.2 Exile and quasi-diplomacy .....	17
2.3 International Institutions and Organisations .....	20
Chapter Three – Methodology .....	24
3.1 Research Design.....	24
3.2 Population .....	25
3.2.1 Sample .....	25
3.3 Research Instruments .....	26
3.4 Procedure.....	26
3.5 Data analysis .....	27
3.6 Research Ethics .....	28
Chapter Four – Exile and Diplomacy.....	29
4.1 African Solidarity: SWAPO in Exile .....	30
4.1.1 Dar es Salaam - Tanganyika (Tanzania).....	31
4.1.2 Lusaka - Zambia .....	33
4.1.3 Luanda - Angola .....	37
4.2 SWAPO and the International Institutions.....	40
4.2.1 The Organisation of African Unity .....	40
4.2.2 The United Nations .....	42

SWAPO and the United Nations.....	42
SWAPO, the OAU and the UN.....	44
The United Nations and the decolonisation of Namibia.....	46
4.3    Quasi-diplomacy: SWAPO's Department of Foreign Affairs.....	47
4.3.1    SWAPO's Representative Offices.....	48
4.3.2    Representative Missions in London and Stockholm.....	54
Chapter Five - The Challenges of Diplomacy in Armed Struggle.....	59
5.1    SWANU vs SWAPO.....	59
5.2    International Recognition.....	63
5.3    Rivalry between SWAPO and South Africa.....	65
Diplomatic Rivalry and the United Nations.....	68
5.4    The Frontline States and the Liberation Movements in Southern Africa.....	72
5.5    Official Diplomatic Recognition.....	75
Chapter 6 - Presentation of Research Findings.....	77
6.1    SWAPO's Diplomatic Front and Foreign Policy.....	78
6.2    The Objectives of the Diplomatic Campaign.....	80
6.3    The importance of the Diplomatic Front.....	84
6.3.1    The Diplomatic Front in relation to the Political Front.....	87
6.3.2    The Diplomatic Front in relation to the Military Front.....	88
6.4    The evolving nature of SWAPO's diplomatic campaign.....	91
Chapter 7 – Conclusion.....	94

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## **Dedication**

To my late father whose response to every one of my complaints was always and will undoubtedly always be “A Luta Continua”.

Ashipala Michael Ruben 1947-2010

## Declarations

I, Saima Nakuti Ashipala, declare hereby that this study is a true reflection of my own research and that this work or a part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in other institutions of higher education.

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## **Chapter One – Introduction**

Former Namibian president, Dr. Sam Nujoma (as cited in Mushelenga, 2007, p.49) said that “SWAPO adopted a three-pronged strategy for the struggle to liberate Namibia, which included the political mobilisation of its people, an armed struggle, and a major diplomatic offensive against the Government of South Africa”. This statement suggests that the South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO) considered internal mobilisation and diplomatic lobbying as significant features of the struggle and that these features complimented and also enabled the military component.

The focus of interest for the study was the diplomatic offensive engaged in by the South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO). Akwenye (2003) in her study on Namibia-Germany relations since 1990 identified that “the main role players in the South West Africa/Namibia question were the United Nations (UN) since Namibia was legally under its trusteeship, SWAPO, which engaged in the struggle for the country’s independence for more than two decades, and South Africa, which ruled the country illegally” (2003, p.28). However it should be noted that the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and its Liberation Committee was also an important development in the South West Africa/Namibia question.

The diplomatic offensive was characterised at first by petitions which were written and through various means brought before the United Nations (UN) and the UN General Assembly (UNGA). This was followed by the establishment of nationalist movements such as the South West Africa National Union (SWANU) and SWAPO in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The focus of these movements was on achieving international recognition and support to establish representative missions and military camps in exile and to grant support to the growing number of Namibians living in exile. At an institutional level the diplomatic offensive was characterised by the need to secure recognition and later observer status from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as well as the United Nations as the ‘sole and authentic’ representative of the Namibian people.

Despite the three-pronged strategy not much academic attention is bestowed upon the diplomatic offensive from the perspective of the Namibian participants and their allies except when the roles of organisations such as the UN and the OAU are discussed in terms of their wider role in conflict resolution. What has been written are usually accounts of the international community’s role in the pre-independence diplomatic negotiations that took place.

According to Saunders (2014) “the more formal diplomatic activity that was engaged in by Namibians in the years of the struggle for independence is a topic that remains under-researched” (2014, p.28). This is despite the fact that “the diplomatic successes of Namibians before independence boded well for the country’s foreign relations after independence, for they could build on what had already been

achieved” (Saunders, 2014, p.35). The study thus hoped to shed light on the challenges SWAPO faced in establishing itself as a legitimate representative of the Namibian people and the mechanisms used to lobby support in the organisations from which it obtained this accolade.

## **1.2 Background: South West Africa the colony**

The occupation of the territory of South West Africa, as was the case with most colonies on the African continent, was a matter of diplomatic negotiations and agreements that played out on the international arena, albeit among European powers that neither owned nor had control over the territories that they wished to occupy. In the historiography of the 1800s these negotiations are called the ‘scramble for Africa’. According to Wallace (2011, p.116), “the European powers agreed on the legal basis of their occupation and partition of Africa at the (in) famous Berlin Conference of 1884-85”. It was here that the future of the territory of South West Africa was determined as “Germany, a latecomer to the scramble for Africa, acquired control of South West Africa during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (Serfontein, 1976, p.19).

### **1.2.1 League of Nations Mandate**

Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the League of Nations was established in 1919 after the end of the First World War. By the end of the War, Germany had lost and, as a

result, had to relinquish control over its territories, including South West Africa. Mushelenga (2008) writes that the League of Nations “mandated European powers to administer the territories formerly colonised by Germany, until the inhabitants of such territories are able to govern themselves” (2008, p.2). Although the European powers were obligated to submit annual reports on the state of the territories to the League of Nations, they were also “granted full power of administration and legislation over the Territory” (Serfontein, 1976, p.21). This was the beginning of the formal occupation of South West Africa by South Africa. South Africa’s authority over Namibia was formally established through the mandate system set up at the end of the First World War by the allied powers.

### **1.2.2 South West Africa under South African Rule**

Wallace (2011, p.206) writes that, “South Africa, like the other British dominions, actively participated in the First World War on the Allied side”. The Union of South Africa went up against the Germans in South West Africa, “attacking both overland and from the sea” until the Germans surrendered in 1915. From 1915, when the Germans surrendered up until 1921 the territory of South West Africa was ruled under martial law. According to Bruwer (1966) the Mandate for South West Africa had been “allocated to South Africa by the Allied and Associated powers on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1919”, it was however only “confirmed by the League of Nations on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1919” (1966, p.86). Finally, in 1921, South Africa, having become the mandatory power, “began to govern Namibia on the new legal basis of a League of

Nations mandate” and became the effective authority over the territory (Wallace, 2011, p.205).

The occupation of the territory of South West Africa resulted in long term economic advantages for the Union of South Africa. These advantages came in the form of profits as a result of the territory’s mineral resources as well as employment opportunities and land for white South Africans. Wallace (2011) argues that South Africa “applied its policies of racial segregation” in its governance of Namibia “seeking, as the German government before it had done, to extract as much wealth from the colony as possible” (2011, p.205). This ensured that the government of the Union of South Africa was able to provide economic opportunities for a section of the impoverished white population of South Africa.

After two decades of South African mandatory power over the territory of South West Africa the Second World War began, at the end of which the League of Nations was no more. A new international organisation was established in its place, namely the United Nations Organisation. The end of the League of Nations, however, did not mean the end of mandatory rule, as the League of Nations, before becoming defunct, passed in a plenary session, the following resolution:

“.....take note of the expressed intentions of the Members of the League now administering territories under mandate to continue to administer them for the well-being and development of the peoples concerned in accordance with the obligations contained in the respective Mandates until other arrangements

have been agreed upon between the United Nations and the respective mandatory Powers.” (Bruwer, 1966, p.111)

That South Africa had no intentions of terminating its mandatory obligations towards South West Africa was made evident by its participation in the passing of the aforementioned resolution. Wallace (2011) writes that “the South African takeover conditioned the history of South West Africa for the rest of the twentieth century (2011, p.215). As the years went on, South Africa made its intentions of annexing South West Africa and turning the territory into its fifth province even clearer. It was in essence these intentions, pertaining to the status of South West Africa, which began the dispute between South Africa and the United Nations.

### **1.2.3 The United Nations**

The end of the League of Nations began with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. After the Second World War, “the United Nations replaced the League of Nations in 1945, and responsibility for the Mandated Territories was handed to a new Trusteeship Council” (Wallace, 2011, p.244). The Trusteeship Council was responsible for supervising the countries which administered the mandated territories established under the former League of Nations. It was to the Trusteeship Council that South Africa was meant to submit annual reports pertaining to the situation in South West Africa.

The dispute between South Africa and the United Nations pertaining to the status of South West Africa led to the reluctance of South Africa in recognising the United Nations and especially its Trusteeship Council which was made responsible for the mandated territories established by the League of Nations. Serfontein (1976) notes that “until the outbreak of the Second World War, when meetings of the Permanent Mandates Commission ceased, South Africa submitted annual reports on its administration of South West Africa” (1976, p.21). The submission of reports pertaining to South West Africa, however, came to an end as “South Africa resisted the new arrangements (at the United Nations with regard to the mandated territories) and tried to persuade the UN to accept the incorporation of Namibia into South Africa as a fifth province” (Wallace, 2011, p.245). The United Nations refused to grant South Africa’s request in 1946 and thus began the dispute that would last for four decades until Namibia gained its independence in 1990.

### **1.3 Orientation of the study**

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004) “Southern Africa was the most racially tormented region of the world during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and racial oppression there gave birth to the formation of liberation movements, including the Namibian liberation movement, that sought to restore the sovereignty of countries and the dignity of their peoples” (2004, p.28). In opposition to South African rule, the South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO), the successor of the Ovambo Peoples Organisation (OPO), was formed in 1960. Unlike OPO,

SWAPO was formed to accommodate and represent all the inhabitants of the territory of South West Africa and not just a specific ethnic group. The main aim of the formation of this nationalist organisation was to provide a united front to oppose what was deemed as the illegal occupation of South West Africa by South Africa. SWAPO used a combination of methods in the hope to achieve its objectives. These methods included “political agitation, armed struggle at home and extensive diplomacy abroad” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004, p.28).

South West Africa/Namibia’s diplomatic foundations were laid during a period in which numerous petitions were written to the United Nations by the Herero Chiefs Council with the initial assistance of Reverend Michael Scott. This was later followed by a period of diplomatic relations of a more formal nature with the establishment of SWAPO representative offices and diplomatic missions to various countries, and continents. Saunders (2014) argues that SWAPO’s diplomatic activities in the 1970s and the 1980s were a ‘substantial achievement’. It was during this period that SWAPO was granted observer status at the United Nations Headquarters. Thomas (1996) writes that the granting of observer status to SWAPO “indicated a trend away from the hearing of petitions as liberation movements no longer had to address the Special Committees as petitioners since they now had a ready forum any time they wish to speak” (Thomas, 1996, p.119).

The 1960s witnessed a turning point in the history of decolonisation with “the admission of dozens of newly-decolonised nations to the United Nations General Assembly dramatically [altering] the tone of debates and resolutions concerning



South African apartheid and colonial rule in Namibia” (Dobell, 2000, p.35). Furthermore, the granting of observer status at the United Nations enabled SWAPO to actively participate in the decisions made on behalf of the country. Saunders (2014) however argues that “too many of the accounts of international diplomacy on the issue of Namibia play down, if they do not ignore altogether, the role played by Namibians themselves” (2014, p.27). And, this despite the fact that it was the Namibian people who voiced their concerns to the international community thus activating the diplomatic relations that were to be established.

#### **1.4 Relevance of the research**

The relevance of the study is first and foremost a contribution to the literature written about pre-independence diplomacy. The available literature on pre-independence Namibian diplomatic relations is mostly written about the role and contribution of the international community. The study will thus contribute to the body of literature that will depict the role played by Namibians in the diplomatic campaign of the liberation struggle, in particular by SWAPO and in general by other Namibians.

Although much of the current rhetoric on the liberation struggle focuses on the armed struggle, Thomas (1996, p.109) writes that “the international legal status of South West Africa and the question of apartheid are some of the oldest disputes at the United Nations” thus any account of SWAPO’s coming to power in 1990 needs to incorporate SWAPO’s diplomatic activities in exile in relation to its armed

struggle. There are, however, “contending memories about the war that intrude into Namibian civil society and political discourse” (Dale, 2011, p.22)

The study hoped to demonstrate how the liberation movement attained its main diplomatic objectives and the obstacles that SWAPO had to overcome in translating international opposition to the illegal occupation of Namibia by South Africa into support for SWAPO as the legitimate representative of the Namibian people. The relevance of the research is that it provides a better understanding of the means by which the political and material support that ensured SWAPO’s survival in exile for almost forty years was obtained.

### **1.5 Research Objective(s)**

The main objective of this study was to analyse the importance of SWAPO’s diplomatic activities in relation to its military and political activities measured against the eventual successful achievement of independence. The focus was on explaining how the substance of SWAPO’s diplomatic activities evolved over a period of time as well as the respective contributions of both SWAPO and external actors in the process.

The specific objectives were to:

- i) uncover the ideas and beliefs underpinning SWAPO’s diplomatic campaign’s and the objectives to which the campaign was directed

- ii) explain to what extent SWAPO shaped the content of its diplomatic policy and how much it was influenced by other forces and conditions
- iii) assess the extent of the diplomatic campaigns contribution to independence

## **1.6 Overview of the study**

In **Chapter 1** of this study an introduction of the topic is provided along with the historical background of the territory and the different colonial powers that reigned over the territory in the different stages of its history. **Chapter 2** deals with the literature reviewed for this research, literature that was drawn from publications written on the history of the territory and also the history of the nationalist movements within the country, both before and after the country had gained its independence. The research methodology that was used for the study, along with the research instruments, as well as the procedure used in the research and the analysis of the data collected for the research, is presented in **Chapter 3**. **Chapter 4** traces the relationship between diplomacy and the practise thereof by SWAPO in exile. The focus will also be on examining the activities of the movement in the different countries in which it had established provisional headquarters as well as the different institutions which had become targets of the movement's diplomatic initiatives. A narration is also provided on the establishment of the movement's department of foreign affairs along with the establishment of representative missions in various countries. **Chapter 5** provides an overview of the challenges faced by SWAPO in not only gaining international recognition as the authentic representative of the

Namibian people but also in the execution of its diplomatic campaign. Finally **Chapter 6** provides an account of the research findings and particularly on the importance of SWAPO's diplomatic campaign in relation to the political and the military front. This is followed by a conclusion in **Chapter 7** and the list of references used by the study.

## **Chapter Two – Literature Review**

History and the study of history is according to Du Pisani (1987) “of special importance, not only because it enables us to understand past events, but also because future events are likely to be influenced by the past”. This according to the author is no different for Namibian history which du Pisani says “has been shaped by factors and forces extraneous to it” (1987, p.13). These factors emerged in the colonial era of the 1800s wherein Namibia, like other African countries, became a colony in the hands of a European power. This has been well documented by authors such as Herbstein and Evenson (1989) *The Devils are Among Us: The War for Namibia*; Serfontein (1976) *Namibia?*; Bruwer (1966) *South West Africa: The Disputed Land*; Kiljunen and Kiljunen (1981) *Namibia The Last Colony*; and finally a 2003 thesis by Akwenye provides an account on German Namibia relations with a historical overview of the relationship between the two nations.

The history of the territory was also, undoubtedly, shaped by world events such as the first and second world wars, the formation of the League of Nations, the creation

of a Mandate System and the establishment of the United Nations Organisation. Du Pisani (1985) and Mushelenga (2008) provide an account on the League of Nations Mandate System and the classification of territories, such as South West Africa by the League of Nations. The League of Nations had classified the territories into three categories:

- A-Mandates were colonies which were about to become independent. These were mostly colonies of the Turkish Empire in the Middle East.
- B-Mandates were colonies that were to be administered as separate entities from the mandatory powers. These were mostly former German colonies in Central Africa
- C-Mandates were colonies that were to be administered as integral parts of the mandatory powers (Du Pisani, 1985, p.51; Mushelenga, 2008, p.3)

Furthermore, a 'C' mandate was deemed to be "inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world" and these mandates were dealt with under the "principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation ..." (Serfontein, 1976, p.21). The territory of South West Africa was allocated the category of a 'C' mandate and was handed over to Britain who in turn handed the territory to the Union of South Africa to administer the territory on its behalf. It was this classification that would provide the territory with a special status in the international community. It is also on this foundation that the nationalist movements that emerged as the representatives of the

inhabitants of the territory would direct their petitions to the international community and in particular to the United Nations.

With the underlying argument that the territory of South West Africa was for long the forgotten colony in Africa Green, Kiljunen and Kiljunen (1981) provide an account on the ideology and development of the struggle for liberation, a struggle opposed to the illegal occupation of the territory by South Africa. It is the diplomatic front of this struggle that is the substance on which this research is based. It is also the interest in the diplomatic campaign that informed the literature that was reviewed for this research.

## **2.1 Nationalism and the rise of Nationalist Movements**

The history of the rise of nationalism, the formation of national movements and the onset of national resistance in the territory of South West Africa is well documented. The history of nationalism in the territory is often linked to the early uprisings in the German colonial era to the war for liberation that would end with independence. It was however a publication by SWAPO in 1981 that would seek to promote what Saunders (2007) called “the nationalist agenda” (2007, p.16). The book produced by SWAPO’s department of information and publicity was called *To Be Born a Nation* and was published in 1981. The publication is credited with bringing together in book form “a detailed account of the colonisation of Namibia and the resistance to it, carrying the story to 1979. It provided not only a detailed history of Namibia before

the armed struggle began, but also an account of how that struggle had developed to the late 1970s ...” (Saunders, 2007, p.16). Other authors who would document similar histories but at differing time periods include Alfred Moleah (1983) *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation*, Andre du Pisani (1985) *SWA/Namibia: The Politics of Continuity and Change*; Katjavivi (1988) in his account on the *History of Resistance in Namibia*; Lauren Dobell’s (2000) account on *Swapo’s Struggle for Namibia, 1960-1991: War by Other Means*.

In Moleah’s 1983 publication the author writes a fervent account on Namibia’s colonial and racial history, documenting the suffering of the people of the territory while targeting his overall work toward an anti-apartheid rhetoric. In brief, Moleah (1983) argues that negotiations for Namibia’s independence without SWAPO would be futile. Du Pisani’s (1985) work studies the struggle of the Namibian people under foreign rule, the challenges faced by nationalist movements, the overall attitude of the South African regime and the disputes that would arise on the world stage as a result of the aforementioned factors. Du Pisani also examines the diplomatic initiatives of the time; initiatives that were introduced to bring about a peace settlement in the dispute over South West Africa/Namibia. The authors’ analysis is, however, only based on the diplomatic initiatives engaged in by Western Powers and not the initiatives of SWAPO. Du Pisani particularly looks at the diplomatic initiatives of the Reagan administration and the shuttle diplomacy engaged in by Henry Kissinger in an attempt to reach an internationally approved settlement for the territory. Peter Katjavivi (1988), on the other hand, attempted to trace the history of Namibian resistance to both German and South African domination. Katjavivi is reflected in varying works as an authoritative source on the liberation history of

Namibia. His work is valuable for the detailed information it provides on SWAPO, both internal SWAPO and SWAPO in exile including a four page narrative on SWAPO's crisis of 1976 (1976, p.105-p.108) which includes what the author identifies as the causal factors of the crisis. Katjavivi's work also places emphasis on the early recognition of the nationalist movements of the value of lobbying the international community, culminating in a discussion on SWAPO and the international forum.

Dobell (2000) in her publication provides a historical account on the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), which was established forty years after South African occupation of the territory. The author states that the organisation was founded during an era that witnessed "the rise and spread of organised resistance to colonial rule" on the African continent (Dobell, 2000, p.27). The author documents both the external and internal challenges faced by the organisation both nationally and internationally. Dobell also writes about SWAPO's internal crisis and how SWAPO successfully averted the negative consequences that could have inevitably ruined its standing in the international community. Marion Wallace in her (2011) publication entitled *A History of Namibia: From the beginning to 1990*, provides a detailed trajectory of the historical events that occurred in the territory from its pre-colonial era to the independence of the territory. It is in Chapter six of Wallace's work that relevance for this research is found, as the author documents what she titled the *War for Namibia*. Reinhart Köbler (2011) in a review of the aforementioned chapter writes that Wallace



“provides a concise and balanced picture of the intricate and contradictory processes around the attempts to unite the various resistance organizations; the South African attempts to force an internal solution that excluded SWAPO; the positioning of various groups towards opportunities seemingly presented to them; ongoing struggles; and, the diplomatic game at the level of world politics” (2011, p.1).

## **2.2 Exile and quasi-diplomacy**

The 1960s witnessed the first wave of exiles from South West Africa to the countries neighbouring the territory. Many of the first group who left the territory through Bechuanaland had been contract labourers en route to South Africa to work in mines. But gradually many ended up being recruited into SWAPO's ranks. The movement would establish a provisional headquarters in Tanzania in 1961. Thereafter many if not all the nationalists who went into exile would go through countries such as Botswana and Zambia in route to Dar es Salaam Tanzania. It was here that the movement's organisational structure would be formulated and cemented.

Namibia's pre-independence diplomatic campaign was not one that was carried out by qualified professionals who had expertise in the fields of diplomacy and international relations (at least not from the onset); however, diplomacy according to Leys and Saul (1995) was the reason why Namibian nationalist went into exile. The

two Canadian academics who edited a publication called *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword*, in (1995) write that international diplomacy was the first key strategy for Namibian nationalist in exile. The authors write that “indeed, the ability to deploy this strategy outside the ambit of South African repression was (*the*) central reason for the early exiles leaving the country” (1995, p.19). In their publication Leys and Saul document SWAPO's advancement in the arena of international diplomacy which the authors identify as having been primarily targeted at the UN as well as the newly independent nations (1995, p.19). *Namibia's liberation struggle: The two-edged sword* is an invaluable source on the strengths and weaknesses of SWAPO as a liberation movement and the challenges faced by the movement. The authors, however, posit that more could be done on the subject of SWAPO's diplomatic campaign and the movement's accomplishments in the arena of diplomacy.

Although its focus is more on the countries post-independence diplomacy and foreign policy making, Peya Mushelenga's MA Thesis submitted in 2008 with UNISA, was a valuable source on SWAPO's diplomatic campaign. The MA Thesis titled *Foreign Policy Making in Namibia: the dynamics of the Smallness of a State* includes a detailed segment on the pre-independence diplomatic activity engaged in by SWAPO and those who had been designated as SWAPO representatives in exile. The author provides information on SWAPO's missions and the responsibility of its representatives in lobbying the international community for the attainment of assistance either in material, humanitarian or military form depending on the country and or organisation.

Authors such as Geingob (2004, *State Formation in Namibia: Promoting Democracy and Good Governance*), Katjavivi and Mushelenga have been extensively used in this study for the unique perspective which they, as senior political figures in current Namibia and as SWAPO leaders in exile (Geingob and Katjavivi), provide on SWAPO, in particular the interplay between diplomatic, political and military activities and policies. Letters and documents written by and addressed to those within SWAPO's department of foreign affairs, contained within Katjavivi's Archival Collection and the SWAPO Archives, helped to shed light on the internal communication and challenges faced by those whose job it was to advance the diplomatic front.

A draft PhD dissertation by Richard Dale (2011) examined the diplomatic, economic and military battlegrounds of the Namibian war for independence. This and Scott Thomas's *The Diplomacy of Liberation: The ANC since 1960* (1996) were used for direction on how one approaches a study of this nature. For as Dale acknowledges, much has been written on the war for independence and he questions whether there is a "particularly innovative approach for reconsidering that war?" (2011, p.1). Thomas's (1996) work on the African National Congress's (ANC) foreign relations sheds light on the specific challenges faced by liberation movements as well as the successes and the settings of diplomacy for liberation movements in the midst of armed struggle. The author's work provides a regional perspective to the issue of diplomacy in armed struggle. Dale (2011) warns of contending memories that intrude into Namibian society and political discourse with regards to the liberation struggle.

The same warning is voiced by Saunders (2007) in *History and the armed struggle: From anti-colonial propaganda to 'patriotic history'?*. Saunders (2007) particularly emphasises the importance of not only the role of the international community in the arena of diplomacy, but also of SWAPO's diplomatic campaign as opposed to the military campaign in the quest for independence. He argues that although the armed struggle for the liberation of Namibia is presented as having been a decisive factor in the attainment of independence the struggle was not nearly as significant in bringing about independence. In his 2014 contribution to a publication on *Namibia's Foreign Relations: Perspectives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* Saunders further examines the diplomatic activity engaged in by Namibians after the Second World War with special emphasis on SWAPO's diplomatic campaign which the author calls "the more formal diplomatic activity engaged in by Namibians" (2014, p.28). The author also argues that the role played by Namibians in the country's pre-independence diplomatic activity is often not reflected in accounts of international diplomacy regarding Namibia.

### **2.3 International Institutions and Organisations**

International institutions and organisations as well as nation states formed the milieu in which the diplomatic activity engaged in by national liberation movements occurred. Geingob (2004) writes that the support of the international community was essential in the attainment of independence by formerly colonised territories. This was grounded in the belief that the international community could and would act on

behalf of these territories. SWAPO's diplomatic campaign was thus focused on and targeted at the international community. Dale (2012), Saunders (2014), Mushelenga (2008), Muller (2012) and Udogu (2012) are all key sources on SWAPO's diplomatic campaign and its focus on the international forum. Dale (2011) writes that "...the United Nations in New York...became one of the central foci of Namibian external nationalism" (2012, p.74). Mushelenga (2008, p. 52) and de Vries (1987, p.297 in Töttemeyer et al.) on the other hand, provide an account on SWAPO diplomats at the United Nations and the diplomatic activities carried out at the United Nations General Assembly.

On the challenges faced by Namibians in the international arena, Töttemeyer (et. al.) write that "the struggle for Namibia's nationhood has had its ups and downs through the years..." however "debates in international forums have at times kept the fire burning in the international community and in diplomatic circles" (1987, p. 7). These debates were often sparked by Namibians themselves through written petitions and verbal campaigns directed not only at the United Nations but also to the platforms of international organisations as well as those of independent states. Töttemeyer (et. al.) further argue that "the United Nations Organisation and its related bodies have indeed not failed in their duties... to this can be added the commitment of the non-aligned movement to the freedom of the Namibian people and the heavy price the frontline states (*paid*) for their commitment to get Namibia on the road to independence" (1987, p. 7). One could argue that it took a certain level of skill on the part of SWAPO to carry out the movements' diplomatic campaign.

Leys and Saul (1995) state that SWAPO's ability to execute its diplomatic campaign yielded substantial results for the movement.

“Stitching together the resources necessary for maintaining SWAPO's operations ... and working both sides of the Cold War; moving gingerly on the slippery terrain provided by the front-line states that provided sanctuary and bases for forward operations; winning friends and neutralizing enemies internationally in order to sustain a convincing presence at the United Nations; weathering South Africa's sustained and determined military offensives .....SWAPO's achievement on all these fronts was by any standard substantial” (1995, p.3).

Leys and Saul, however, also identify that not much has been written about SWAPO's diplomatic campaign in their publication and thus propose that the intriguing theme of SWAPO's diplomatic accomplishments deserves more research (1995, p.3).

Some accounts on SWAPO's diplomatic campaign provide a general overview of the campaign and the targets of this campaign. Others such as Muller (2012, *The Inevitable Pipeline into Exile: Botswana's Role in the Namibian Liberation Struggle*) document the role played by others (Botswana and the Frontline States) in SWAPO's liberation struggle including the diplomatic front. Muller's account sheds light on the first group of Namibian exiles and the tactics they used to go into exile while providing a detailed account on Botswana as a transit route to Tanganyika. Muller

(2012) identifies Francistown as the centre of SWAPO's representative office in Botswana and discusses the differing characters of SWAPO's representatives in Botswana, over the years. His work also sheds light on the general diplomatic activity of SWAPO, such as the rotation of its representatives, the journey of the leadership and the weakened position of Botswana as an exit route with the opening of the Angolan border due to the collapse of the Portuguese empire.

Works by Sellström (1999 and 2002 *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa Volume I and Volume II*; Soiri and Peltola 1999 *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*; Eriksen 2000 *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*) document the relationship that existed between Namibia, Namibia's Nationalist Movements and the Nordic states, specifically the contributions made by the Nordic states to Namibia's liberation struggle.

Evans (1984) and Jaster (1983) narrate the history of the formation of the Front-line States, the character of these states, as well as the contribution these states made to the liberation movements in the Southern African region, including SWAPO. Of specific interest to this study is the role played by the Front-line States in the establishment of SWAPO's representative missions both on the continent of Africa as well as abroad. An acknowledgement of the Front-line states in the liberation for Namibia is documented by SWAPO in a 1980 publication (SWAPO 1980, p.6).

Aside from the aforementioned authors, this study also relied on United Nations publications depicting the negotiations preceding Namibia's independence,

especially those emanating from the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as the specialised agencies. The United Nations Institute for Namibia (1987) *Namibia: A Direct United Nations Responsibility*, for example, provides a useful overview of the UN structure, the history of Namibia as an international issue and the key personalities and events in the diplomatic struggle.

## **Chapter Three – Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The methodology employed by the study falls under the qualitative research methodology. The study also applied a historical research design. Historical research constitutes the systematic examination of past events and thus the aim is to portray what happened in the past and to convey an understanding of that past, at best, in a chronological order. The historical research design took on an analytical approach to assess the strategies, aims and policies of SWAPO's diplomatic front as contained in sources as well as a comparison of sources to overcome bias. Primary and secondary sources were used in the study as well as oral evidence through interviews with research participants.



## **3.2 Population**

The research was predominately based on a body of literature relevant to the research topic. The research population was, however, also drawn from individuals, living in Windhoek, who were in one way or another involved in the pre-independence diplomatic campaign. The body of literature relevant to the study was drawn from both pre-independence as well as post-independence publications on Namibia and especially on the ‘liberation struggle’ era of its history. The literature was comprised of both primary and secondary sources related to the research topic housed in libraries as well as archives in Windhoek, Namibia.

### **3.2.1 Sample**

Purposive sampling which is also known as judgemental sampling was employed in identifying research participants of relevance to the research topic. The research sample targeted key surviving Namibians who were in exile and through various means, such as the early years of petitioning and through national movements, were involved in pre-independence diplomatic relations. The research acknowledges that there were different dimensions to the diplomatic campaign engaged in by SWAPO during the struggle for the liberation of Namibia. The differing dimensions were characterised by the different decades in which the diplomatic campaign occurred, as well as the changes in the international community that influenced the campaign. The study thus hoped to have a sample size representative of the aforementioned, as different individuals entered the diplomatic campaign at differing stages. Much effort

went into selecting informants that could offer varying and even conflicting perspectives on the validity, and effectiveness of the diplomatic strategy of SWAPO. This ensured a cross-section of opinions on SWAPO's diplomatic policy and whether it achieved its objectives.

### **3.3 Research Instruments**

The personal recollections of events, known as oral histories were gathered through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were recorded with the use of a digital voice recorder so as to ensure that the research participants' exact recollections are captured. The recorded interviews were then transcribed and weighed against the researchers' field notes so as to determine the accuracy of what was captured. Primary sources comprised of archival material such as letters and photographs as well as secondary sources which were mostly books from libraries sum up the research instruments that were used for this study.

### **3.4 Procedure**

The first step was to conduct an orientation reading in order to familiarise myself with the historical era and the origins and evolution of the South West Africa/Namibia matter until independence. Subsequent readings gradually honed in on the role of diplomacy in SWAPO's liberation struggle to gain a greater understanding of the powers and operational structures of international organisations

such as the OAU and the UN. The research approach primarily identified and located information pertaining to the research which was then collected and evaluated. The evaluation of sources sought to determine the quality of the sources regarding the evidence they contain and the relevance to the research. Oral histories were obtained through semi-structured interviews with research participants who were identified through purposive sampling. The interviews were recorded using a digital recording device and the recordings were transcribed. The transcribed interviews were then compared to the researcher's field notes in order to ensure that the participants' recollections were accurately captured. The collected data was then triangulated and synthesised so as to compile the final report.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

Collected data before it could be analysed through content analysis, was first examined so as to determine the relevance to the research. After the examination, the collected data was triangulated and placed within its historical context. The triangulation process was both essential for the data collected through oral histories as well as that which was obtained through primary and secondary sources. This was essential in helping the research establish the trustworthiness of the information contained in sources. It is especially important to compare various opposing views, as the nature of conflict is such that one will obtain conflicting accounts and will need to allow space in ones research for a multi-vocal approach where this takes place. A multi-vocal approach, in this context, refers to the attainment of different

perspectives from different people, which in turn allows for a compilation of a comprehensive analysis from the data obtained during research. The gathered information was then drafted into a narrative of the events that occurred.

### **3.6 Research Ethics**

Historical research promotes an ethical system to research and one of the most important of these is the respect of research participants. The researcher ensured that all participants were informed about the objectives of the research. This was done from the onset of the data collection process, when interviews with the research participants were requested. Furthermore the researcher obtained permission from research participants for the interviews to not just be recorded but also transcribed for archival purposes for future research. Appropriate citations were also applied to all sources and especially to primary sources stating names correctly, exact dates as well as making mention of the collection and locations in which the sources are found.

## Chapter Four – Exile and Diplomacy

South West African nationals and especially those in the SWAPO leadership first went into exile in the early 1960s for a variety of reasons. For some it was to seek educational opportunities, for others it was to find work as contract labourers (especially in South Africa), whereas for some it was to evade arrest because of their involvement in the nationalist political activity of the 1960s. Whatever the reason for their going into exile, most if not all nationalists would become exposed to what Amathila (2013: interview) called “the struggle concept” while in exile and would soon grasp the strategy of diplomacy.

In the 1960s many of the leaders went into exile through the Namibian border with Botswana, as documented by Muller in his 2012 publication called *the inevitable pipeline into exile: Botswana’s role in the liberation struggle of Namibia*. It was only in 1974 “that the importance of the escape route via Botswana diminished because of the new possibilities created in the north by the Revolution of the Carnations which led to the independence of Angola” (2012, p.10). However, the destination for most of the early exiles, unlike that of the exiles of the 1970s, was Dar es Salaam Tanzania, which according to Muller (2012) had become the “centre of many southern African liberation movements in exile...” (2012, p.41).

It is worth noting that SWAPO as a movement was never banned in South West Africa and its activities were never deemed illegal. Muller (2012), however, writes that “...political agitation against South Africa’s occupation was made virtually

impossible [and] for this reason, most influential SWAPO leaders left their country ...in order to mobilise support for their goals within the international community” (2012, p.41) The mobilisation for support was according to Murray (in Katjavivi PA 1/2/2) done through the exertion of “diplomatic pressure on South Africa to withdraw from Namibia via an intensive lobbying campaign throughout the international community.” This, Murray writes, was “a major aim of the SWAPO leadership since going into exile in the early 1960’s”. In the early days, this lobbying campaign or rather what SWAPO called its diplomatic campaign, “was directed primarily at the UN and the newly independent nations...” (Leys & Saul, 1995, p.19).

#### **4.1 African Solidarity: SWAPO in Exile**

The struggle for Namibia’s liberation had ceased to be a primarily national affair when Namibian nationalists went into exile. Neighbouring countries, according to Muller (2012), were used “as places of refuge, as transit stations or even to prepare guerrilla activities...” (2012, p. 233). In the 1960s SWAPO managed a provisional headquarters in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. This would change in the next decade when SWAPO moved its offices to Zambia and later to Angola. SWAPO, according to Wallace (2011), was essentially running ‘a state within a state’, supported by the presidents of the neighbouring countries and, indeed, much of the international community (2011, p. 281).

This section (4.1) seeks to give a brief overview particularly of SWAPO's provisional headquarters in exile and the move from Tanzania to Zambia and later Angola.

#### **4.1.1 Dar es Salaam - Tanganyika (Tanzania)**

Tanganyika a former German colony was under British Administration when it gained its independence in 1961. The country would become known as Tanzania after the decision to become one with the Island of Zanzibar which is said to have had a shared history with Tanganyika. In the 1960s Tanzania found itself in a strategically important political and diplomatic position to host liberation movements from all of over southern Africa. The country's status as a recently independent state served as an inspiration to most national liberation movements who found themselves in exile with the sole aim of liberating their countries.

According to Mushelenga (2008) SWAPO's offices in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania were opened by Sam Nujoma (SWAPO's president) upon his arrival in Dar es Salaam in 1961 (2008, p.43). The office would serve as both provisional headquarters in exile as well as an "operational headquarters" (Katjavivi 1988, p.60). The operational aspect to the headquarters was largely related to the training of military cadres and the consolidation of the military strategy as SWAPO had embarked on a military campaign in August of 1966. Military cadres, who had returned from training either in Algeria, or the Soviet Union and even China, would return to Tanzania before embarking on military missions into Namibia. Thus, besides the headquarters in Dar

es Salaam, SWAPO cadres also lived in a camp that had been “granted by the Tanzanian government to OAU recognized liberation movements” (Williams, 2009, p.1). The camp was called Kongwa and was established through collaborative work with other liberation movements from Southern Africa in 1964. Williams goes on to say that it was here that “Southern Africa’s liberation movements... governed their own citizens for the first time” (2009, p.2). Williams (2009) further argues that the Kongwa camp was not just for military purposes but it also enabled camp inmates to forge international relationships.

In addition to its ability to inspire, Tanzania and especially Dar es Salaam was important for one other reason – it was also the headquarters of the OAU’s Liberation Committee. It was here according to Williams (2009) that the Committee was “close to the Southern African nations whose liberation movements were opposing colonial apartheid regimes and received support from the Tanzanian (then Tanganyika) government, led by Julius Nyerere” (2009, p.3).

Besides the functions of provisional headquarters and operational headquarters, Tanzania also served as the venue for an important and historical SWAPO Consultative Congress. Moleah (1983) documents that “at the end of 1969, SWAPO held a Consultative Congress at Tanga in Tanzania December 26, 1969 to January 2, 1970, to take stock of the unfolding situation, and make necessary adjustments. Delegates came from all SWAPO organs...in addition to assessments and evaluations, and the charting of new directions, the Congress embarked on reorganisation to accommodate the tasks ahead” (1983, p.102).



Saunders (2014) writes that “once SWAPO’s provisional headquarters were established in Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika (now Tanzania), SWAPO began to place representatives in a number of other countries” (2011, p.9). A major part of SWAPO’s diplomatic policy orientation was, however, formulated and structured at the Tanga Consultative Congress. Muller (2012, p.172) identifies Peter Nanyemba as having been SWAPO’s representative in Dar es Salaam in 1965, whereas, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, according to Mushelenga (2008, p.5) was the representative in Dar es Salaam from 1980-1986. It is not clear as to how long Nanyemba held the position of SWAPO representative and if someone else held the position in the 1970s.

#### **4.1.2 Lusaka - Zambia**

Zambia, a former British Colony, gained its independence in the latter half of 1964 with Kenneth Kaunda serving as the first president of independent Zambia. After it had gained its independence from the British, Zambia became a home for most if not all liberation movements in Southern Africa. This was no different for SWAPO, which would move its provisional headquarters from Tanzania to Zambia in the early 1970s. Wallace (2011) writes that the transfer occurred after the 1969-70 Tanga Congress. The move according to Wallace (2011) had not only been made possible by Zambia’s independence but also by “President Kaunda’s support of the Namibian liberation movement...” (2011, p. 279).

Leys and Saul (1995) argue that “SWAPO ... was still a small and relatively fragile organisation as it made its move to Zambia ... and maintained a relatively modest

operation” (1995, p.46). The movement would however strengthen in stature due to the support it received from the Zambian government. Zambia, Namibia’s neighbour to the North-East, was, according to Muller (2012), “usually in strong support of measures taken by the OAU and its African Liberation Committee (ALC)” (2012, p. 72). With SWAPO having gained recognition from the OAU as the authentic representative of the Namibian people, Zambia would “only receive SWAPO refugees because it was the only Namibian liberation movement recognised by the OAU” (Muller, 2012, p.72).

Geographically as well as logistically, Zambia, in comparison to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, was better suited for the military aspirations of SWAPO. Muller (2012), however, argues that the move was also inspired “by educational opportunities that were offered to refugees from southern Africa in Zambia” (2012, p. 70). With regards to Namibian refugees, Muller (2012) links his argument to the establishment of the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) in Lusaka. The UNIN was established in 1976 with financial support from UN member states as well as UN institutions. Murray in his profile on SWAPO (contained in the Katjavivi Archives) writes that the objective of the UNIN was to train “future administrators for Namibia and provide specialised research needed by a future independent government” (Murray, p.8, in Katjavivi PA 1/2/2).

Besides the offices in Lusaka, Namibians under SWAPO’s care also lived in a settlement on the outskirts of Lusaka called the Old Farm. It was here that most young people who had left for exile in the wave of the 1970s would receive

educational training. A larger Educational Centre would later be created at Nyango, Zambia to accommodate the increasing number of refugees. The centre provided not only educational training, but also acted as a transit point for those awaiting their departure to other countries either for educational training or military training or diplomatic postings.

Although Zambia was the ideal location on most if not all levels of the struggle for liberation, it was also where contentions and divisions in SWAPO occurred. The 1969 Consultative Congress in Tanga Tanzania had established resolutions which included a time frame as to when the next congress would take place. However this did not materialise. According to Dobell (2000) the Congress held at Tanga was already “convened in an atmosphere of discontent within the exiled movement” (2000, p. 38). The atmosphere worsened with the exodus of 1974 that led to a high influx of young Namibians into exile.

Dobell (2000) writes that the initial problems were of a logistical nature, however, these problems escalated into shortages in food supplies, clothing and medicine. Plans to process the new exiles and to incorporate them into PLAN and prepare others for further studies proceeded at a slow pace leading to great discontent among the young exiles. These issues along with discontent among older PLAN fighters especially regarding the scarcity of weaponry led to the escalation of the crisis within SWAPO.

Discontent was mounted against the leadership with complains from various sectors of the movement. There were also calls for greater transparency especially among the top leadership of the movement, as well as calls for consultation between those in leadership and the different sections of the movement. “By April of 1976 SWAPO was openly in conflict” (Williams, 2009, p.104). The dissonance had “elements of a power struggle, of ideological differences, and disagreements over the course SWAPO should follow in its policy and actions over the liberation of Namibia” (Totemeyer, 1977, p. 302).

In an attempt to bring the situation under control, the SWAPO leadership reached out to the Zambian government. Totemeyer (1977) notes that the Zambian Government became involved at the request of the SWAPO leadership and placed those involved in the dissonance under what they called ‘protective custody’ (1977, p. 302; Redekop 1980, p.74). Protective custody was, according to Williams (2009), the official explanation given by Zambia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs when news of the crisis and the ensuing arrest reached the media. The arrest, according to the Ministry, were done for the safety of certain SWAPO individuals (2009, p.103).

An official response from SWAPO on the crisis would come following the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry charged with the responsibility of uncovering the circumstances that led to the crisis. The crisis would later be known as the Shipanga crisis after the ya Otto report (named after the chairman of the Commission John ya Otto), attributed the crisis to Andreas Shipanga (SWAPO Secretary of Information) and the SWAPO Youth League (Williams, 2009, p.74).

The Commission of Inquiry was also tasked with recommending the way forward in order for a crisis of this nature not to be repeated. Leys and Saul (1995), Dobell (2000) and Williams (2009) provide a detailed narrative on the crisis and how SWAPO successfully averted the negative consequences that could have inevitably ruined its profile and reputation in the international community.

Wallace (2011) writes that “at the same time, the movement’s position in Zambia ... had become precarious” (2011, p. 279). The instability occurred in 1974 when relations between President Kaunda and “South African Prime Minister Vorster briefly improved” (Wallace, 2011, p. 279). The period was called ‘détente’ and would have effects on SWAPO’s military activities from Zambia. This led to reservations regarding SWAPO’s military prospects, as well as its position in Zambia.

#### **4.1.3 Luanda - Angola**

Van Zijl (in Totemeyer 1977) writes that “the most vital overseas event which has intimately affected South West Africa has been the break-up of the Portuguese empire in Africa by revolution and violence” (1977, p. 187). Historically, the revolution is known as the Revolution of the Carnations and it occurred in 1974 when “the government of Portugal was overthrown in a coup, and its successor quickly moved to grant the Portuguese colonies independence...” (Wallace, 2011, p. 297). This specific revolution contributed to the liberation struggle for Namibia in that it opened up Namibia’s border with Angola. This not only enabled a large number of Namibians, especially among the youth, to go into exile but it also granted

PLAN fighters access over the border into Ovamboland leading to increased military activity in the region.

Wallace (2011) writes that although “the shift in the international situation led to the intensification of conflict both inside and outside Namibia ... it also raised the diplomatic problem of choosing an allegiance in the initially confused situation in Angola”. This was however soon resolved when SWAPO who had “briefly sided with UNITA”, threw in their “lot with the MPLA” (2011, p. 279). The increase in the numbers of Namibian exiles was a welcomed reinforcement; it however caused problems of a logistical nature for the movement which had not been prepared for such a drastic increase in its members. Wallace notes that although SWAPO “had considerable problems finding accommodation and supplies for the new arrivals” (2011, p. 280), it became “increasingly well organised (from the mid to late 1970s) in both Zambia and Angola in order to provide for its members...” (2011, p. 283). The movement established camps in Angola at Kwanza Sul, Lubango and Cassinga with a network of smaller camps (Wallace 2011) to both accommodate and provide for the medical and educational needs of their members.

The move to Angola was however also essentially for military purposes as the long border between the two countries, with its familiar terrain, was used “for attacks on the South African occupation army in Namibia” (Hendrix, 2006, p. 59). The familiar terrain and the proximity of the territory from Angola made SWAPO feel “that the strategic balance (in its fight against South Africa) is in its favour”; this according to de Vries (in Totemeyer 1977) was also “because of the attitude and assistance of the

front-line states, particularly Angola where SWAPO had joined forces and come to an agreement with the MPLA” (1977, p. 295).

It was, however, in Angola, that SWAPO would experience its worst military attack. SWAPO’s camp at Cassinga was bombed by South African forces on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 1978 (a day which is commemorated to this day in independent Namibia) leading to the deaths of many, mainly woman and children. In the aftermath of this attack, many children were sent for safety to countries in the Eastern bloc including East Germany, a move facilitated by diplomatic relations that existed between SWAPO and the Soviet Union (USSR) (Wallace 2011).

It was also while in Angola that SWAPO enjoyed considerable solidarity with and support from the international community, most especially from the Nordic Countries with Sweden being the leading donor of solidarity aid. These acts of solidarity by the Nordic states are well documented in the following publications: Sellström (1999 and 2002) Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa Volume I and Volume II; Soiri and Peltola (1999) Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa; Eriksen (2000) Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa. Angola’s contribution to the liberation struggle of Namibia under the leadership of SWAPO was of great significance. The country not only provided land for the establishment of camps for exiled Namibians but it also brought about a balance in the military strategy of SWAPO against its superior antagonist - South Africa. (SWAPO Department of Foreign Affairs 1988; Müller 2012; van Zijl and de Vries in Töttemeyer 1977; Mushelenga 2008; and Hendrix 2006).

## **4.2 SWAPO and the International Institutions**

Namibia's status as a former mandated territory afforded SWAPO an opportunity to lobby the international community regarding the illegal occupation of the territory by South Africa. The aim was to exert diplomatic pressure on South Africa in order for the colonial power to withdraw from Namibia. Much of the lobbying was directed at newly independent African states, especially through the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) but also at the global community through the United Nations. The result of SWAPO's lobbying was support from the international community. Udogu writes that "the groups support in Africa was rooted within the context of the OAU's continental policy of a total emancipation of Africa from colonial rule [and] at the United Nations from its philosophy on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples" (2012, p. 83).

### **4.2.1 The Organisation of African Unity**

Founded in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa in May 1963, the aim of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was to realise "pan-African goals in the context of greater co-operation among African states" (Muller, 2012, p.72). The Organisation was founded at a time where more and more African nations found themselves independent after centuries of colonial rule.

The organisational structure of the OAU led to the establishment of various committees under the auspices of the OAU. One such committee, according to



Williams (2009), was the “Co-ordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa, which soon became known as the OAU Liberation Committee” (2009, p.3). The OAU Liberation Committee (ALC) whose secretariat was based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, was established in 1963 through a resolution adopted by the first assembly of heads of state and government. The ALC, according to Muller (2012, p.73), was “founded in order to assist those Africans who were still living under minority governments or colonial regimes.” The acceleration of the process of decolonisation as well as the elimination of apartheid on the continent along with the organisation of diplomatic support and the channeling of both financial, military and logistical aid were all part of the ALC’s responsibilities. Williams (2009) elaborates that the Committee for the Liberation of Africa was “tasked to decolonise the territories in Africa which remained under colonial rule” (2009, p.3).

One such territory was South West Africa/Namibia as alluded to prior to the section on the OAU. SWAPO as a liberation movement was recognised as the authentic representative of the Namibian people at “an OAU summit in Rabat, Morocco, in 1972” (Saunders 2012, p.2). Dobell (2000, p.35) writes that the founding of the Organisation of African Unity and the establishment of its African Liberation Committee was key to SWAPO’s fortunes. The Liberation Committee had according to Muller (2012) “obligated its member states to contribute to its budget and it was from this budget that the African liberation movements received financial assistance” (2012, p.73).

Although invaluable financial assistance was made available to SWAPO by the OAU, through the Liberation Committee, Muller (2012) argues that the financial assistance to SWAPO from the ALC fund was not all that significant. He goes on to say that it was rather the recognition granted to SWAPO by the ALC that was of importance. This, Muller says is because the “assessment of the ALC was adopted by the United Nations which would later declare SWAPO the authentic representative of the Namibian people” (2012, p. 73). The recognition by the ALC raised SWAPO’s status in the international community, granting the movement access to international forums that would otherwise have proven difficult to access. According to Mushelenga (2008), the international community would hereafter recognise the movement diplomatically (2008, p. 6).

#### **4.2.2 The United Nations**

South West Africa/Namibia was a mandated territory under the League of Nations and consequently under the United Nations (UN). When a dispute arose between South Africa and the United Nations over the governance of the territory, the UN as the successor of the League of Nations, “was commonly regarded as the body that should be in control of the...territory” (Muller, 2012, p.67).

#### **SWAPO and the United Nations**

The plight of the inhabitants of the territory was brought to the attention of the United Nations through numerous petitions, written by the Herero Chiefs, which

were delivered to the UN with the assistance of Reverend Michael Scott. These petitions would become the foundation on which SWAPO would build its diplomatic campaign at the United Nations headquarters in New York. A SWAPO representative mission was established in America in 1964 when Sam Nujoma upon his visit to America tasked Hage Geingob, Theo-Ben Gurirab and Hidipo Hamutenya with the responsibility of representing SWAPO in the United States of America and particularly at the United Nations. The three had been students at American Universities after having obtained scholarships through varying means such as the United Nations (Theo-Ben Gurirab).

If ever there was a training ground where Namibian ‘diplomats’ honed their skill it was the United Nations in New York, where everything was learned by trial and error and with the assistance of African diplomats accredited to the UN. While Dale (2011, p.74) writes that “...the United Nations in New York...became one of the central foci of Namibian external nationalism”; Saunders (2012) argues that the efforts of Namibian diplomats, “contributed to the further internationalisation of the South West Africa issue” (2012, p. 3).

**Table 1. SWAPO Representatives at the United Nations**

Representative:	Position:	Duration:
Hage Geingob	Chief Representative	1964-1972
Theo-Ben Gurirab	Associate Representative	1964-1972
	Permanent Observer	1972-1986
Hinyangerwa Asheeke	Deputy Permanent Observer	1981-1989

Mushelenga (2008) writes that recognition of SWAPO by the UN not only raised the movement's profile in the international community but it also led to direct financial benefits for the movement's representative mission in New York. The funds were made available to its mission through the UN Council for Namibia. At the same time, "SWAPO's representative at the UN (Theo-Ben Gurirab) became the movement's Permanent Observer to the UN", as indicated in Table 1 (Mushelenga 2008, p. 52).

### **SWAPO, the OAU and the UN**

SWAPO had obtained favour from the OAU in the early 1970s which resulted in the recognition as the authentic representative of the Namibian people in 1975. This paved the way for SWAPO's recognition by the UN. Muller (2012) writes that the UN had "declared SWAPO the authentic representative of the Namibian people" in 1976, a year after the recognition from the OAU and later even the "sole and

authentic representative of the Namibian people” (2012, p.73). This recognition was bestowed upon SWAPO through the “United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3/152 of 1976...which consequently accorded the movement observer status in the UNGA” (Mushelenga 2008, p.6).

That the OAU was influential in the UN’s recognition of SWAPO is undeniable, for as Saunders writes “issues that SWAPO wanted to bring to the attention of the international community were often discussed first at meetings of the OAU [...] before being raised in the United Nations General Assembly” (2012, p.6). This went as far as the UN’s recognition of SWAPO’s decision to pursue armed struggle. The then Chairman of the OAU, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoola, in an address to the UNGA “emphasized that the OAU was determined – and had unanimously resolved that should all efforts to find a peaceful solution to Namibia’s problems fail, the OAU would ensure that recourse to armed struggle would not only be pursued but intensified with the help of friends of the OAU and the progressive nations of the world” (de Vries in Totemeyer 1977, p. 297).

Over the years, the OAU has been involved in and cooperated with various UN Committees dealing with decolonisation in an effort to emancipate the continent according to the vision of the OAU.

## **The United Nations and the decolonisation of Namibia**

That the question of Namibia had gained importance at the United Nations became evident in 1966 when the Organisation assumed direct responsibility over the territory in an effort to swiftly bring about the decolonisation of the territory. Redekop (1980) writes that “after its founding the United Nations attempted to extend its authority over the territory in order to lead it to independence, as a unitary state, on the basis of majority rule” (1980, p. 70).

The United Nations established a Council for South West Africa in 1967 which would be renamed the UN Council for Namibia the year after it was established. The Council was appointed to legally govern the territory of South West Africa after the UN had revoked South Africa’s mandate over the territory. “Through the UN Council for Namibia ... the World Organisation has sought in earnest to carry out multi-faceted assistance programmes and veritable political initiatives in favour of Namibians in SWAPO exile centres and other Namibians elsewhere abroad” (SWAPO Department of Foreign Affairs 1988). With the urging of the Council a United Nations Fund for Namibia was established with the intention of making financial as well as material assistance available to Namibians in exile.

Following this a United Nations special programme, namely the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) was introduced to streamline the training of future civil servants for an independent Namibia. The introduction for the Institute was piloted by the UN Council for Namibia and was based in Lusaka, Zambia. The Institute was

established and maintained with financial assistance from UN agencies and member states. Hage Geingob, SWAPO's chief representative to United States of America would return to Zambia to serve in the position of Chairman of the UNIN. Muller (2012) writes that "despite the lack of de facto control of Namibia," it had increasingly become evident that the "UN was an organisation that could not easily be sidelined in the Namibian conflict" (2012, p. 67).

Furthermore, the UN Council for Namibia had taken a decision to make travel documents available to Namibians in exile. This, according to SWAPO's Department of Foreign Affairs (1988), enabled Namibians to "travel throughout the world on United Nations Council for Namibia Travel and Identity Documents, which the office of the Commissioner for Namibia issued to them, thereby enhancing their nationality as Namibians, while at the same time asserting its own authority over the Territory". At the time the United Nations had regional offices in Gaborone, Luanda and Lusaka from which the promotion of the wellbeing of Namibians in exile was also administered.

#### **4.3 Quasi-diplomacy: SWAPO's Department of Foreign Affairs**

Despite the fact that SWAPO had already been involved in diplomatic activities, its Department of Foreign Affairs was only established in 1970 when the movement held its first Consultative Congress at Tanga in Tanzania. According to Amathila (interview with Sellström 1995) it was at Tanga that "an administration was set up

which made people believe that SWAPO was preparing to declare itself unilaterally as a government in exile” (1995, p.63).

The Department of Foreign Affairs, according to Udogu (2012), “was responsible for promoting friendship, cooperation and active solidarity with all anti-imperialist and democratic forces and movements fighting for liberation of man from all forces of oppression, exploitation and foreign domination” (2012, p.86). The establishment of the department thus greatly impacted the diplomatic front of the liberation struggle, making it a better organised campaign with an “intensified diplomatic offensive” (SWAPO 1976, p. 7). This was accomplished through the establishment of missions on the continents of Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas and this according to Saunders (2012) was done “to gain further support in the international community for Namibia’s liberation struggle” (2012, p.5).

#### **4.3.1 SWAPO’s Representative Offices**

Mushelenga (2008) writes that between 1970, when SWAPO’s Department of Foreign Affairs was established until 1990, when Namibia gained its independence, SWAPO maintained 27 missions on four different continents. A majority of these missions came into being after the establishment of SWAPO’s provisional headquarters in Dar es Salaam and were mostly based in independent Africa. Tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that Namibia’s independence remained a subject of discussion at the United Nations and other relevant international forums, the



missions and those sent to act as representatives had to work in varying environments and with minimal resources to accomplish the task set before them. The establishment of the missions was geared towards the cultivation of sympathetic relationships with host governments and the citizens of their state in order to garner support for the effective and efficient execution of the liberation struggle and also to counter the South African propaganda against SWAPO (SWAPO Department of Foreign Affairs 1988).

There were varying reasons for the establishment of missions in specific countries however the aim was the same – gain support for SWAPO’s armed struggle and ensure the Namibian issue remains on the agenda of the international community. SWAPO Chief Representatives were not only tasked with the responsibility of cultivating relationships with their host government but also effectively monitoring the political, military and diplomatic developments in their area of representation. They were to accurately report back to the Headquarters on the host government’s position and general attitude towards the struggle for Namibia’s independence. It is from their reports that the Headquarters and more specifically the Department of Foreign Affairs would develop a diplomatic strategy on how to best approach the host nation while gauging the degree to which they could effectively draw on this relationship (SWAPO Department of Foreign Affairs 1988, Mushelenga, 2008, p. 60).

In the later years of the struggle, the Department of Foreign Affairs provided guidelines to their Chief Representatives on how to establish relationships within

their area of assignment. In their initial contacts with the diplomatic corps, the representatives were for example, encouraged to make their first visits to the embassies of the frontline states, before visiting the embassies of other African countries. Thereafter they were encouraged to make calls on the embassies of socialist states as well as the embassies of the Nordic States (SWAPO's Department of Foreign Affairs 1988). The representatives were encouraged to update themselves with the situation in Namibia and the political activities that occurred in the territory.

**Table 2: SWAPO's missions and representatives in Africa**

Continent	Country	Representative	Year
Africa:	Algeria	Helao Ndadi	1963
	Angola		1974
	Botswana	Maxton Joseph	1961
	Egypt	Helao Ndadi	1962
	Ethiopia		
	Libya	Nicky Nashandi	1977
	Tanzania	Peter Nanyemba	1961
	Senegal	Tuliameni Kalomoh	1976
	Zambia	Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah	1970

In Africa, countries such as Algeria, Egypt and Libya provided military training and weaponry. Others such as Senegal, The Gambia, Nigeria and Congo Brazzaville provided educational facilities and opportunities towards those who needed to complete their high school education in preparation for university studies. Tanzania, Zambia and Angola would become homes away from home, where SWAPO would establish camps and educational centres to accommodate Namibians in exile. While others like Botswana, Zambia and later Angola would act as transit routes. Whatever the possibility offered by a country, it was the role of SWAPO's chief representative to secure the possible opportunities that could be made available to Namibians in exile.

**Table 3: SWAPO Representative and Missions on other continents**

Country	Representative	Year
Finland	Nicky Iyambo	1965
France	Tuliameni Kalomo	1981
Sweden	Ben Amathila	1970
United Kingdom	Peter Katjavivi	1968
USSR		1987
India		1982

The research could not establish the exact year a mission was opened in countries such as Australia, Cuba and Iran as documented in Mushelenga (2008). However, on a list of invitees to a Seminar Training in Diplomacy (dated 1988), the mission in Australia is documented as having been based in Melbourne with Joel Kaapanda as the Chief Representative. The same list reveals that the mission in Iran was headed by Titus Mwailepeni who is referred to as an Ambassador, while the mission in Cuba had Peter Tsheehama as its Chief Representative (SWAPO Department of Foreign Affairs 1988). It is also worth noting that the mission in India was awarded full diplomatic recognition with SWAPO's Chief Representative being awarded the title of Ambassador and secondly that the mission in Egypt was opened and maintained with funding from the Egyptian government.

Success for SWAPO's diplomatic front was contingent on the effective coordination of SWAPO's diplomatic activities by its Department of Foreign Affairs. Katjavivi (1976, p.2) summarises the following as vital factors to the effectiveness of SWAPO's diplomatic efforts:

- a) providing publicity, information, propaganda about Namibia and the Namibian struggle;
- b) fundraising for aspects of the liberation struggle (including, in many instances, the continuing operation of our offices);
- c) governmental and other official contact aimed at maximising influence and exerting persuasion

- d) the gathering of local political, economic and so on information bearing on Namibia and the South African regime, and the receiving country's activities in these areas (i.e. ordinary diplomatic intelligence work);
- e) being of assistance to Namibians in the area of accreditation

Various SWAPO documents, contained in both the SWAPO Party Archives and the Archival collection of Peter Katjavivi at the University of Namibia Archives, have referred to the fact that SWAPO's Department of Foreign Affairs experienced some problems with regard to the running of its representative missions. Most of these problems were of a financial nature regarding the cost of running a mission, the transport cost associated with the representation of more than one country by a representative as well as the cost associated with the provision of information regarding the struggle for Namibia's independence.

Problems also emanated from inadequately staffed missions, with Chief Representatives functioning in an environment where they lack adequate support. Katjavivi (1976) attest to this when he wrote that "it may be administratively inept to confer on particular diplomatic posts over-extensive areas of responsibility without adequate personnel to provide ancillary and back-up" (1976, p.3). Be that as it may, the most significant of these problems, however, was that of communication and namely communication between the department and the various missions. Katjavivi (1976) writes that "however adequate the disposition and staffing of overseas posts may be, their activity will be ineffectual or their efficiency at least lowered if there is not adequate central co-ordination and policy planning, determination and co-

ordination” (1976, p.4). He argues that although the internal strategy of the department emanates from reports and recommendations written by the representatives it is the responsibility of the department to not only have the final say but also to make clear foreign policy guidelines available to the representatives. This enabled the department and the missions to be on equal footing and to voice the same message to the international community.

#### **4.3.2 Representative Missions in London and Stockholm**

The research briefly presents the following two cases; one on the mission in London, UK and the other on the mission in Stockholm, Sweden. The decision to provide a detailed yet brief account on the two aforementioned missions was based on the importance bestowed upon the mission in the UK and also on the volume of solidarity support that would result from the diplomatic relations established in the Nordic countries through the office in Stockholm, Sweden.

##### **London, United Kingdom**

SWAPO’s representative office in London was established in 1968. Located on 21/25 Tabernacle Street the office was responsible for Western Europe. Its first Chief Representative was Peter Katjavivi who headed the office from 1968 to 1977. Peter Katjavivi had joined SWAPO in 1961 and had gone with others into exile through Botswana in 1962. Katjavivi in an interview with Hendrix (2006, p.56) notes that he was sent to London “by the SWAPO president, after a massive process against

SWAPO leaders in 1967 that had caused many to be sent to Robben Island”. The aim was to establish a SWAPO representative office in London that would act as a base for lobbying the British Government as well as European political parties and church groups.

In an interview with Krasno (1999, p.5) for the Yale-UN Oral History Project, Katjavivi states that the initial purpose of the representative office in London, having been established after the Robben Island quandary of 1967, was to “focus the attention of the international community on issues concerning Namibian prisoners”. At the time the city of London was considered the communication centre of the world and was thus a vital centre for the establishment of a SWAPO mission. It however, thereafter, continued to be about the building of “solidarity support for SWAPO, for Namibia and generally [about raising] the profile of ... SWAPO within Western European countries” (1999, p.5).

The role, from advocacy regarding Namibian prisoners at Robben Island to raising SWAPO’s profile, was accomplished with finesse by the London mission. Saunders (2014) writes that SWAPO’s mission in London “became one of the organisation’s most important missions, for leading SWAPO personnel often passed through London”. Furthermore Saunders (2012) writes that “though successive British governments were not sympathetic to SWAPO, Britain was home to what became the largest and most effective Namibian solidarity organisation [with] which a succession of SWAPO diplomats and other personnel interacted in a variety of ways” (2012, p.4). Fund-raising in Britain had however proved to be quite a challenge and

was therefore not wholeheartedly pursued by SWAPO and thus the focus remained on raising SWAPO's profile in the international community.

To whom much is given much is however also expected, thus heading the office in London meant juggling responsibilities between school and the diplomatic campaign. Katjavivi notes that while at the London office he had to "run a newsletter, he maintained links with the home front, informing them of decisions taken at the United Nations and the activities of SWAPO in exile". He notes that "a great deal of work went through the London office – building up a strong diplomatic front generally." He also described his job as being about "continuously [keeping] the leadership within the country informed, but at the same time build[ing] a network of support in a number of Western European capitals, in London ... Geneva, [and] Bonn." (Interview with Krasno, 1995, p.6)

### **Stockholm, Sweden and the Nordic States**

In 1970 Ben Amathila set up the first SWAPO representative office in the Swedish capital of Stockholm. Located on Regeringsgatan No. 5 in Stockholm, the office was in his words a "small flat...it was just one room. I spend my nights there, cooked my food there and also did my political work in that room" (Interview with Sellström 1995, p.63). In describing the circumstances in which he received the assignment to establish the mission in Stockholm, Amathila states that there were no specific instructions on how to accomplish the task set before him. The assignment had been handed to him shortly after the Consultative Congress held in Tanga, Tanzania.



According to Amathila, his “instruction was very vague; it was left to me to devise means of creating the Stockholm office and to make it work. To open the office, I was only given 15 US Dollars pocket money. The ticket was provided by the Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation in Moscow, which gave it to me to attend a student conference in Helsinki in 1971” (1995, p.63). He was not provided with any form of training let alone a budget for the establishment and running of the mission.

The representative mission in Sweden was however not SWAPO’s first in the Nordic region as Nicky Iyambo had established an office in Finland in 1965. The mission had been established in Finland when Nicky Iyambo “then studying in Finland, was appointed SWAPO’s Chief Representative to the Nordic countries” (Saunders 2014, p.31). Sellstrom (1995) however writes that Ben Amathila was “the first official SWAPO representative to the Nordic countries, based in Sweden” (1995, p.62).

The establishment of the mission was in itself a difficult situation; however the region in which the mission was established proved to be an even greater challenge considering the directives of SWAPO’s diplomatic campaign in the 1970s. Saunders (2012) writes that “Iyambo and later representatives to those countries, such as Ben Amathila in Sweden, had some difficulty in justifying SWAPO’ adoption of the armed struggle to people not sympathetic to the use of violence...” (Saunders 2014, p.30). The Nordic countries, in their support of national movements in Southern Africa had resolved not to fund or support armed struggle. They thus became instrumental in what was called ‘solidarity’ aid through the supply of material rather than military aid. Once again the recognition bestowed upon SWAPO by the OAU

proved beneficial in diplomatic efforts to gain support from the Nordic countries. Amathila (1995) notes that “I came to realise that the Sweden government already at this time [...] accepted the Liberation Committee of the OAU...[and]...used it as a guide to inform themselves of what was happening in Africa and what position to take” (Interview with Sellström 1995, p.63).

The Nordic countries would over the years provide material aid towards the establishment of SWAPO camps in both Zambia and Angola. Groups of volunteers were sent from the Nordic countries to the camps to support SWAPO in the areas of health and education (from pre-primary education to teachers training). On assistance from the Nordic Countries, Katjavivi in an interview with Sellström (1995, p.73) stated that “you owe it to the people of the Nordic countries to have it on record, so that future generations can understand that at a given time in the history of the people of Namibia the Nordic world stood up in a remarkable way and provided assistance which was a major source of strength to many of us in the region”. SWAPO as a movement also expressed its gratitude to the Nordic countries and particularly Sweden, for the humanitarian assistance provided to the people of Namibia throughout the years.

What had begun as an obscure assignment to establish a mission in Sweden, with no finances and no support structure ended in reasonably good diplomatic relations with countries that opposed armed liberation struggle but sympathised with the aims of Namibians to obtain freedom from colonial rule.

## **Chapter Five - The Challenges of Diplomacy in Armed Struggle**

### **5.1 SWANU vs SWAPO**

The South West Africa National Union (SWANU) was founded in 1959 and had by the 1960s made its mark on the international stage before SWAPO. SWANU emerged from the student's movement of the late 1950s and at its onset the movement enjoyed favourable backing from the Herero Chiefs Council, who were the precursors of the culture of petitioning in the territory. Most of SWANU's leadership was composed of students and these students were based in different parts of the world which in turn enabled them to raise awareness on their movement and their campaign for the situation in Namibia. Dobell (2000) writes that "to many observers, SWANU initially appeared the more promising organisation. Its leadership was relatively well-educated, articulate and dedicated, with a clear programme of action, and an apparent commitment to collective decision-making" (2000, p.32).

According to Mushelenga (2008) SWANU's President, Fanuel Kozonguizi, was based in London where he was pursuing his studies and other senior leaders of SWANU were also studying (2008, p. 50). Ben Amathila, for example, in an interview with Sellstrom (1995), states that when he got to the Nordic countries and Sweden in particular, he found that people were more aware of SWANU than they

were of SWAPO. Thus one could argue that by the 1960s SWANU had made greater strides in gaining international recognition compared to SWAPO.

Mushelenga (2008) however argues that it was eventually this composition of a student leadership that would negatively impact on SWANU's image as a representative of the Namibian people. The general view of SWANU was that it did not perceive the struggle for the liberation of Namibia with the importance and urgency due it. This according to Mushelenga (2008) also obstructed SWANU's access to resources and general assistance from the relevant authorities especially at the OAU. He writes that "SWANU's representative in Tanzania, Moses Katjiuongua, had problems to be granted appointments, since he was competing with relatively senior freedom fighters from other liberation movements in southern Africa, including SWAPO" (Mushelenga 2008, p. 50).

Compared to the SWANU leadership, SWAPO's leadership was based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where the movement had established its provisional headquarters. Mushelenga (2008) writes that "the President of SWAPO and other senior leaders of the movement were based at the provisional headquarters in Dar es Salaam and only travelled to petition at the UN, attend international conferences and lobby support from various governments (2008, p. 50).

Dobell (2000) recognises the approach toward the United Nations as yet another difference between SWAPO and SWANU. She writes that the noteworthy difference was in "SWAPO's continued reliance on the United Nations to play a substantial role

in achieving Namibia's independence, which contrasted sharply with SWANU's emphasis on self-reliance (2000, p. 32). Petitions were regularly brought before the United Nations and the different committees of the organisation and it is here that the rivalry between the two movements would become evident. SWAPO would later have permanent observers at the United Nations after having gained recognition from the United Nations as the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people.

The OAU's directive toward armed struggle for the liberation of the territory would become another avenue of difference between the two nationalist movements. Sellström (1999) writes that "initially, both SWANU and SWAPO were recognised by the OAU. However, when the OAU Liberation Committee requested the two organisations to present their plans for armed struggle, SWAPO could point out that it had been training military cadres in various African countries from 1962, while SWANU declared that it was not prepared for military confrontation" (1999, p.272). SWAPO had submitted plans to the OAU's Liberation Committee as opposed to SWANU and it was the decision to pursue armed struggle in 1966 that set SWAPO apart from SWANU in the arena of international recognition. This according to Sellström "led to the de-recognition of SWANU in 1965" (1999, p.272).

Moleah (1983) writes that "with the initiation of armed struggle, SWAPO clearly emerged as the Vanguard organisation of the Namibian people" (1983, p.101). In agreement with Moleah, Dobell (2000) writes that "it was SWAPO's 1962 decision to launch an armed struggle against the South African regime that demonstrated its superior commitment to the liberation of Namibia. This distinguished it from

SWANU in the eyes of international supporters as the genuine vanguard of the nationalist struggle, and the legitimate recipient of any assistance that was forthcoming” (2000, p.34). SWANU would eventually lose out on any form of financial, military and material support from the OAU and the OAU’s Liberation Committee.

It is worth noting that the rivalry between the two movements occurred more on the international level than it did on the national level. On the national front, both movements, according to Dobell (2000) “advocated unity among the peoples of the territory, both demanded the abolition of imperialism and colonialism, and an end to all forms of oppression and exploitation” (2000, p. 32). The rivalry between the movements resulted from the need to not only assert themselves but also to gain international recognition, support and solidarity for the furtherance of their objectives. Both had provisional headquarters in exile, the majority of their leadership was based in exile and both movements had established representative offices in various countries. Mushelenga (2008) asserts that it was the diplomatic activity of SWAPO and the movements role in the “foreign affairs of South West Africa and a future Namibia, which eventually resulted in it succeeding over SWANU” (2008, p. 50). The Cold War environment of the given time as well as the split in Sino-Soviet relations also significantly contributed to SWAPO’s external ascendancy and victory over SWANU in the race for recognition (Dobell 2000).

In 1964 SWAPO submitted its plans for waging a military struggle to the OAU, and shortly thereafter was awarded the entire sum allocated by the OAU Liberation

Committee for the liberation of Namibia, and formally recognised by the Organisation as the “sole and authentic” representative of the Namibian people. SWANU which had demonstrated an understandable scepticism about the wisdom of taking up arms against an infinitely more powerful enemy, lost all prospect of ever receiving assistance from the OAU or any of its members, while SWAPO, which still had no long-range military or political strategy, took sole control for the struggle (Dobell, 2000, p.35).

## **5.2 International Recognition**

After the submission of its plans to wage military war against the South African regime, to the OAU’s Liberation Committee, SWAPO gained official recognition from the OAU as the authentic representative of the Namibian people. This gesture would be adopted by the United Nations, which would add the title of ‘sole’ to the authentic representative title awarded by the OAU (Redekop 1980, Mushelenga 2008, Dobell 2000). “That recognition went hand-in-hand with the granting of observer status thus affording the movement with a valuable platform from which to articulate the plight and aspirations of the Namibian people” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004, p.44).

Further recognition would come from other organisations, the most notable being the recognition from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Founded in 1955, the Non-Aligned Movement was the brainchild of former Egyptian prime minister Gamal

Abdul Nassar, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito (NAM History). The Organisation was founded with the aim of ensuring "the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics" (NAM History). It is therefore no wonder that the organisation came out in strong support of SWAPO in its quest to bring an end to colonial rule in Namibia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004). Mushelenga (2008) notes that "in 1961 SWAPO President, Sam Nujoma, attended the founding of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) in Belgrade Yugoslavia" (2008, p. 48). After this, SWAPO would attend various meetings of the NAM and later on become a full member in 1978 (Mushelenga 2008, p.6).

SWAPO's membership in the NAM was of great significance in that it provided SWAPO with a platform on which to practice its multilateral diplomacy. The NAM, like the OAU acted as a channel through which SWAPO brought its pressing matters to the world stage. Issues affecting SWAPO and of relevance to the movement's long term goal of independence, would firstly be discussed and adopted at meetings of the OAU and NAM before getting to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). This according to Mushelenga (2008) ensured that the UNGA would pass resolutions in favour of SWAPO (2008, p.59).

Furthermore, a relationship was established between SWAPO and the Commonwealth. Historically the territory of South West Africa/Namibia was not a



British colony - however the movement was recognised by the Commonwealth and received financial assistance towards the educational training of Namibians in exile (Dobell 2000; Mushelenga 2008).

According to Mushelenga (2008, p.7) “the President and senior leaders of SWAPO regularly attended and addressed high-level meetings of international organisations such as the UNGA and Security Council, UN agencies, Heads of State Summits, and meetings of the OAU, NAM and the Frontline States (Cliffe 1994, p.53 and Saul & Leys 1995, p.173)

### **5.3 Rivalry between SWAPO and South Africa**

SWAPO’s diplomatic campaign against the South African regime was the beginning of the more formal objections to the occupation of the territory of South West Africa by South Africa. As mentioned earlier, much of SWAPO’s diplomatic campaign was built on the foundation of petitions that had been written by inhabitants of the territory first to the League of Nations and later to the United Nations. Diplomatic success for SWAPO was elusive in the 1960s, the rejection of the case brought before the International Court of Justice by Ethiopia and Liberia on behalf of Namibia being the most disheartening. The International Court of Justice ruling would however have the opposite effect on the South African regime. Udogu (2012) writes that “... it would suffice to note that Pretoria was emboldened by the ruling of the International Court of Justice...” (2012, p.62). South Africa would henceforth embark on a campaign to discredit SWAPO in the international community. Besides

branding SWAPO and SWAPO members as terrorist, the Pretoria regime also used factors such as SWAPO's relationship to communist states, the movement's decision to embark on armed struggle and SWAPO's internal crisis to discredit the movement.

For its part, SWAPO never took sides between East and West and according to Udogu (2012) "SWAPO never described itself as a Marxist-Leninist party. Instead the group described itself as a popular movement whose objective ... was based on pragmatism" (2012, p.89). Furthermore SWAPO would seek assistance, in the form of solidarity and material aid, from countries like Sweden and Finland who are internationally viewed as neutral countries. SWAPO's decision to embark upon an armed struggle, on the other hand, was viewed by the movement as a continuation of politics by other means. Armed struggle was employed as a tool in the grand scheme of bringing about independence for the territory of Namibia and was only pursued when diplomacy seemed to yield no results. Even in the midst of SWAPO's internal crisis of 1976, South Africa was identified as the enemy in the process and progress of conflict-resolution to the Namibia situation. The official report on the crisis compiled by SWAPO to provide a response to the international community, identified South Africa and its imperialist allies as the conspirers behind the crisis (Williams 2009). According to the movements President, Sam Nujoma, "this problem came about as a consequence of a well-coordinated, well financed conspiracy by the South African regime and its imperialist allies, especially West Germany, to destroy SWAPO as the only effective fighting force against South African occupation of our country" ... (Williams, 2009, p.113). The South African regime was suspected of having planted spies within the ranks of SWAPO and Leys

and Saul argue that "...one must not trivialise security concern (as) the world of the southern African liberation movements of the period was honeycombed with intelligence operatives from many countries, East and West. Not least important were agents of South Africa itself who managed either to penetrate the movements own ranks or to get quite close to them..." (1995, p.53). There was thus pressure on movements like SWAPO and this undoubtedly contributed to internal conflict. Through support from the Zambian government, who according to Williams (2009) was SWAPO's greatest ally during this period, the movement weathered the crisis of 1976. Leys and Saul (1995) identify that the movements "international credibility was momentarily shaken" (1995, p.50). However most of the movement's international supporters never came out in direct criticism of the movement as most chose to wait and see how the events would play out (Leys and Saul 1995). In order to restore its credibility SWAPO launched an official investigation into the matter resulting in an official report which, according to Williams (2009) was used by SWAPO's diplomatic representatives to "mend relationships with long-standing allies..." (2009, p.114). The report helped to restore SWAPO's credibility in the international community, evidence of which could be seen in increased and direct aid to the movement "from African, Scandinavian and Eastern bloc governments, Western solidarity movements and humanitarian organisations and the United Nations" (Williams, 2009, p.114).

## **Diplomatic Rivalry and the United Nations**

The United Nations had become an essential element in SWAPO's diplomatic campaign against South Africa. Chakaodza (1990) writes that "in 1966 the United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to terminate South Africa's mandate over Namibia and to place the territory under the direct control of the United Nations" and according to him the International Court of Justice also endorsed this decision in 1971 (1990, p.45). The decision by the United Nations General Assembly marked the official diplomatic rivalry between SWAPO and South Africa. The decision by the UNGA was rejected by the South African regime who continued to occupy and govern the territory. Udogu (2012) notes that "arguably, the attitude of South Africa toward the UN on this discourse was dictated in part by the fact that the United Nations had little, if any, enforcement mechanics to apply its rulings on the territory..."(2012, p.63).

Even though SWAPO boasted the support of the United Nations and various international organisations in its diplomatic campaign against South Africa; "Pretoria was supported diplomatically, economically and militarily by the United States and other Western Countries" (Chakaodza 1990, p.45). Udogu (2012) further elaborates that "South Africa had some influential friends in the United Nations that it counted on to make the wheels of diplomatic negotiation grind slowly (and in its favour) ..." (2012, p.63). These included Britain and France who had economic investments in both South Africa and Namibia. Despite this Chakaodza (1990) notes that SWAPO for its part "was designated by the UN as the 'sole and authentic representative of the

People of Namibia and was supported by the Frontline States, OAU, the Non-Aligned Movement and the majority of members of the UN” (1990, p.45). This gave SWAPO’s diplomatic campaign the legitimacy it required to take on South Africa on the world stage. It was nonetheless difficult because of the ‘world powers’ that had collaborated with South Africa.

Dobell (2000) writes that a diplomatic strategy was required to overcome the imbalance between South Africa and SWAPO. “This option was particularly attractive and feasible in Namibia’s case, in light of the territory’s previous mandate status, which made it the responsibility of the world, as represented at the United Nations” (2000, p.67). The diplomatic strategy thus became one directed at the United Nations, at presenting the Namibian case at the world body while isolating South Africa in the process. This, according to Redekop (1980), resulted in various threats being levelled against South Africa at the United Nations, such as mandatory sanctions, the expulsion of South Africa from the United Nations, and a mandatory arms embargo. These threats were, however, prevented through vetoes of the Western states, particularly the United States, Britain and France. Despite the vetoes “the General Assembly effectively barred the country (South Africa) from participating in its deliberations by refusing to recognise the credentials of its delegates” (Redekop 1980, p. 76). The refusal by the United Nations was marked as a diplomatic victory for SWAPO as the organisation had established its role as the main adversary to South Africa. Saul and Leys (1995), hail “.....SWAPO’s role as the unremitting antagonist of South Africa ....diplomatically on the world stage ...” as being crucial to the success of the movement’s diplomatic campaign (1995, p.3).

The focus of the South African regime was to eliminate the threat of a SWAPO takeover, resulting in its opposition to and rejection of any United Nations interventions related to the governance of the territory of South West Africa. South Africa embarked on an internal settlement called the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance conference in a bid to bring about a transition under its control. Both the internal and external wings of SWAPO did not participate in the conference which was “organised and supported by South Africa as a way of bypassing UN-sanctioned arrangements for resolving the conflict of self-government for the territory” (Udogu, 2012, p.83). Unfortunately for South Africa, SWAPO had already established itself as the “authentic voice of the Namibian people” on the world stage (Redekop 1980, p.75). This, along with South Africa’s disregard of the United Nations, made international support for South Africa precarious.

The successful diplomatic isolation of South Africa by SWAPO meant that no state openly supported the illegal occupation of the territory by South Africa. Hackland et al. (1986) however write that “while no country is prepared to admit support for the regime, South Africa has been able to maintain its occupation through the de facto support it has enjoyed in the West” (1986, p.51). This support came in the form of vetoes at the UN Security Council and the sale of weaponry to the South African Defence Forces resulting in an imbalance in the military fight between South Africa and SWAPO. This would only even out in the latter half of the war with the entrance of Cuban military personal with the support of USSR weaponry.

Nonetheless, on the diplomatic front SWAPO according to Leys and Saul (1995) “continued to advance diplomatically,....both in further isolating South Africa on the Namibia question and in establishing its own credentials as the Namibian answer” (1995, p.16). In May of 1972, according to Udogu (2012), SWAPO had organised an international conference on Namibia in Brussels, Belgium (2012, p.113). The conference was organised in a bid to gain international support, while highlighting the situation in Namibia. “The Namibia International Conference was one effort undertaken by SWAPO to reach out for global support; which provided the group an added clout in negotiations with the United Nations and South Africa over the Namibian issue” (Udogu 2012, p.115).

The collapse of the Portuguese empire in Africa and specifically in Southern Africa further weakened South Africa’s position as the regional power. “The inflexible South African policy towards Namibia, involving de facto annexation, the implementation of apartheid and Bantustan policies, and the resolute opposition to any form of United Nations intervention in the territory, underwent a sudden and radical shift” (Redekop 1980, p.73). This shift facilitated the diplomatic negotiations that would occur in the region in the 1970s and the 1980s, albeit with a fair share of misadventures, which would finally lead to the independence of Namibia.

#### **5.4 The Frontline States and the Liberation Movements in Southern Africa**

The period of decolonisation, in Southern Africa, was characterised by a struggle for liberation that directly and indirectly involved a majority of the countries in the region. The 1960s witnessed a change in the political dynamic of the region with a handful of countries gaining their independence while others embarked on guerrilla warfare in the hope of liberation. The independent states in the region that formed the backbone of support for those countries that had embarked on armed struggle would become known as the Front-line States. These were Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zambia. Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland had all gained their independence in the 1960s with Mozambique and Angola having both gained their independence in 1975. Zimbabwe too would become a member of the Frontline States after it gained its independence in 1980.

The Front-line States were what Evans (1984) called a “.... diplomatic coalition of independent Southern African Front-line States” which emerged in 1976 whose first task was to manage the crisis that resulted from the Rhodesia-Zimbabwe war (Evans 1984, p.1). The coalition was “considerably strengthened when the resolution of the conflict resulted in an independent Zimbabwe becoming the sixth Front-line State in 1980” (Evans 1984, p. 1; Jaster 1983). According to the South African History Online webpage the Front-line States were also formed to “co-ordinate their response to apartheid and formulate a uniform policy towards apartheid government and the liberation movements”. The coalition of these Southern African states was



characterised and represented by a “unique idiosyncratic diplomatic alliance fully committed to the anti-apartheid cause and to give diplomatic and moral support to the states most directly affected namely Mozambique and Angola” (Evans 1984, p.5).

Although the primary emphasis for the Front-line States was diplomatic action, they also served another purpose to the liberation movements in the region. Liberation movements in Southern Africa, including SWAPO, had to adjust to the change in the political environment of the region. Exile politics became the order of the day, even for SWAPO who, unlike the ANC, was not formally banned in Namibia. Exile politics, however, presented its own problems. O’Malley (2004) writes that “after 1960 the anti-apartheid forces had to adjust to the new environment of exile politics” where it became “crucial to cultivate and maintain overseas sanctuary, support and funding”. It is for this reason that support from the Front-line States became a crucial necessity to the liberation movements. The Front-line States became homes away from home and not only acted as military training grounds but also as launching pads from which liberation movements would bring the fight to the South African regime. Muller (2012) writes that “... the liberation movements made use of neighbouring countries as places of refuge, as transit stations or even to prepare guerrilla activities...” (2012, p.233).

For SWAPO the three most important of the Front-line States were Tanzania where SWAPO’s first provisional headquarters was established, Zambia and Angola where SWAPO not only established refuge centres but also carried out raids on the South African armed forces. The Zambian government, as alluded to earlier, came out in

full support of SWAPO during the movement's internal crisis of 1976. "As a member of the OAU, Zambia was part of the collection of nation-states which since 1964 had given SWAPO money to support the training of guerrilla insurgents and since 1965 had recognised SWAPO as Namibia's sole and authentic representative. This formal status, in turn structured the personal relationships of Zambian and SWAPO officials" (Williams, 2009, p.105).

Cooperation between the Front-line States and the liberation movements was also vital on a diplomatic level, granting the movement access to international institutions and organisations. This was of fundamental importance to the establishment of the diplomatic missions or representative missions of the liberation movements. SWAPO diplomats in establishing new missions and contacts in their area of duty were advised to seek out the assistance of and gain an audience with diplomats from the Front-line States before exploring other avenues (SWAPO Department of Foreign Affairs 1988).

O'Malley (2004) notes that a "major drawback to gaining the cooperation of many of the frontline states was their economic reliance on South Africa". This was a fact that the South African regime was well aware of and at some point embarked on a mission to get its neighbours to sign treaties that would compel them to decline assistance to the liberation movements. Although this caused problems for liberation movements like SWAPO who would move its provisional headquarters from Zambia to Angola, the mission was not a very successful one because decolonisation and an end to apartheid reign in the region was of a greater benefit to the Front- line States. Regarding Namibia Redekop (1980) writes that "...the frontline states would benefit

greatly from a de-escalation of tension and violence in the region and thus felt the pressure for a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Namibia. Countries such as Angola and Zambia faced serious economic and social problems resulting from the reprisal and hot pursuit raids conducted by the South African forces” (1980, p.76). For its part, SWAPO, in acknowledgement of the role played by the Front-line States, “expressed its appreciation and gratitude... especially to the Front-line countries, for the steadfast support for the cause of the Namibian people” (SWAPO, 1980, p, 6).

The Frontline states were also recognised by the international community for their role in the process of decolonisation in the Southern African region. In an effort to bring about a regional solution to the conflict in Southern Africa, the West and more specifically the Western Contact Group sought “the consent of the so-called frontline states ... to secure the participation of nationalist forces and to guarantee international recognition” (du Pisani, 1985, p.329).

## **5.5 Official Diplomatic Recognition**

Having discussed SWAPO’s diplomatic missions at length in the previous chapter, this section focuses on the official diplomatic status accorded to SWAPO’s mission in India. The mission in New Delhi, India is documented as having been established in 1982. The research could however not establish the name of the SWAPO representative who was tasked with the opening of the mission. In 1985, three years after it opened, the mission was accorded diplomatic status by the Indian government.

Both Saunders (2014) and Mushelenga (2008) write that SWAPO enjoyed all the privileges accorded diplomatic missions of independent states as a result of this recognition. These privileges were not only extended to the SWAPO Chief Representative, who was now referred to as an ambassador, but also the movement's President, Sam Nujoma, whose visits were treated as official state visits (2014, p.31; 2008, p. 53). Mushelenga (2008), who notes Tuliameni Kalomoh as having been the Ambassador in India between 1986 and 1989, elaborates that "SWAPO maintained an embassy and enjoyed all diplomatic privileges in terms of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations" (2008, p.53). The recognition of SWAPO's mission by India yielded greater international benefits for the movement as it elevated "SWAPO's standing within the NAM because India is one of the active members of the NAM" (2008, p. 53).

Furthermore, SWAPO also gained official diplomatic recognition for its missions in Iran and the USSR. SWAPO's Department of Foreign Affairs (1988) recognised Titus Mwailepeni as the Ambassador to Iran and Philemon Malima as the Ambassador to the USSR based in Moscow, Russia. SWAPO's diplomatic and cordial relationship with the USSR is documented in Shubin (2008) *The Hot 'Cold War': the USSR in Southern Africa*, wherein the author provides a detailed narrative of the aforementioned relationship.

## **Chapter 6 - Presentation of Research Findings**

The journey into SWAPO's diplomatic campaign has culminated in the following research findings. The results were collected from research interviews with key informants; from Archival material found at the University of Namibia Archives as well as the SWAPO Party Archives and lastly from publications printed and produced before and after the territory gained its independence. This chapter focuses on uncovering the ideas and beliefs that underpinned SWAPO's diplomatic campaign as well as the objectives to which the campaign was directed. It also seeks to explain the extent to which SWAPO shaped the content of its diplomatic policy and how much it was influenced by other forces and conditions.

Lastly the chapter seeks to explain how the substance of SWAPO's diplomatic activities evolved over a period of time while analysing the importance of SWAPO's diplomatic activities in relation to its military and political activities measured against the eventual successful achievement of independence. In its 2004 publication, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acknowledges that the struggle for the liberation of Namibia 'was a great school of diplomacy' as testified to "by the vast international exposure availed to Namibia's would-be future foreign policy formulators and executors" as, for close to three decades, SWAPO's representatives "worked assiduously to mobilise world public opinion in support of Namibia's struggle for liberation" (2004, p.29).

## **6.1 SWAPO's Diplomatic Front and Foreign Policy**

SWAPO's diplomatic campaign emerged from a three-fold struggle for the liberation of a territory that had been under colonial rule since 1884. This three-fold struggle was composed of a Political Front, a Diplomatic Front and a Military Front. According to Udogu (2012) "SWAPO's plan and policy in the early 1960s ... rested on a decision made by the group to use diplomatic, political and military initiatives as procedures for seeking self-governance for Namibia" (2012, p.83).

The political front is often referred to as the home front and was characterised by and focused on raising the political awareness of the inhabitants of the territory. This took place in the 1950s and the early 1960s with the formation of national movements that emerged with inspiration from two different groups: the student movements of the era and the group of migrant labourers who found themselves in South Africa at the height of national mobilisation in that country.

The military front on the other hand was formally introduced in the latter half of the 1960s with the onset of the armed liberation struggle. It was characterised by military confrontations and skirmishes between the movements military wing the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and the South African Defence Force (SADF), mainly at the northern border of the country. The front had its own challenges regarding the military training of the movement's cadres, the supply of ammunition and weaponry and more importantly access to the northern border of the country. These would improve over the years with the opening of the Angolan border and the

funding and support from the OAU's Liberation Committee as well as from the socialist states.

SWAPO's diplomatic front, and the diplomatic efforts that would arise from the front, was undoubtedly rooted in the understanding that the territory of South West Africa was a mandated territory and therefore enjoyed protection from the international community. This understanding was reflected in the early years of petitions that were written by individual inhabitants of the territory to the League of Nations and more importantly to the United Nations Organisation when it emerged as the successor of the League of Nations. When the South African regime had rejected and refused to recognise the authority of the United Nations with regards to mandated territories, the aim for the nationalist movements had according to Dobell (2000) been "to fight relentlessly to achieve United Nations Trusteeship ...." (2000, p.30).

SWAPO's diplomatic campaign which emerged in the 1960s with the formation of the movement had thus been informed by the petitions that had been written over the years. The Political Program adopted at a meeting in Lusaka, Zambia in 1976 reveals SWAPO's foreign policy as having been:

- I. To work in solidarity with other national liberation movements and other anti-imperialist, progressive and peace-loving forces throughout the world with a view to ridding Namibia, the African continent and mankind of colonialist and imperialist domination;

- II. To support and promote the ideals of unity of Africa as provided for in the Charter of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU);
- III. To work in close co-operation with all progressive governments, organisations and popular forces for the total emancipation of the African continent;
- IV. To fight against all manoeuvres, from any quarter, that are aimed at a reactionary solution which is contrary to the realisation of a total and genuine liberation of Namibia; and
- V. To foster and strengthen the anti-imperialist unity amongst the national liberation, world socialist, progressive and peace-loving forces in order to eliminate all forms of imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism.

(SWAPO, 1976, p.6)

In summary, SWAPO 's foreign policy was geared at bringing an end to colonial and apartheid rule in order to achieve liberation and independence for the continent of Africa and more importantly for Namibia.

## **6.2 The Objectives of the Diplomatic Campaign**

After the provisional headquarters had been established in Dar es Salaam Tanzania, SWAPO began to open missions in various countries on the different continents. This was done in order for the movement to achieve its diplomatic objectives. The



first and foremost objective of the diplomatic campaign was to make the international community aware of the situation in the territory of South West Africa.

This was of primary importance because the regime in Pretoria, which had been entrusted with the responsibility of exercising mandatory powers over the territory, was planning on annexing the territory instead of preparing the inhabitants for eventual self-governance. SWAPO's diplomatic campaign was thus targeted mainly at the United Nations but also at the newly independent African states which could relate to and understand the value of territorial sovereignty. Theo-Ben Gurirab, in confirming the aforementioned objective, states that "as representatives of the Namibian people ... and ... as the leaders of the struggle of the Namibian people we went out of the country and took the story and in the process won understanding, support and the camaraderie of the international community" (Interview with Theo-Ben Gurirab, April 10, 2013).

The second objective was to gain recognition from the international community and specifically from the United Nations as the authentic representative of the Namibian people. The quest for recognition was based on the argument of legitimacy, particularly the legitimate right to self-governance as opposed to what was deemed as the illegal reign of South Africa over the territory (Dale 2011). Recognition from the UN would thus confer a status on the movement as the legitimate and legal representative of Namibia and the Namibian people. SWAPO's diplomatic efforts were intensified for the purpose of obtaining this particular objective. Once

recognition had been obtained from the OAU and the UN, SWAPO's diplomatic roles were summed up as follows:

- I. to destroy the credibility, internal and external, of the illegal South African administration of Namibia
- II. to represent, at the international level, the wishes and experiences of Namibian people
- III. to co-ordinate with agencies and government programmes of aid and assistance to our people's struggle;
- IV. to work for international understanding and acceptance of our role as the Namibian people's representative and our legal, moral and political right to act as the Government-presumptive of Namibia

(Katjavivi, 1976, p.1)

The third objective of the diplomatic front was to gain support from the international community for the armed struggle pursued by SWAPO for the liberation of Namibia, while isolating South Africa in the international community. The aim of this isolation was to destroy what little credibility or legitimacy the Pretoria regime might have claimed of its rule over Namibia. SWAPO's diplomatic offensive is said to have "helped a great deal in isolating South Africa internationally and to build up a strong movement for sanctions against South Africa" (Saxena 1991, p.80).

By the late 1970s, SWAPO had established offices and representative missions in countries all over the world. SWAPO's Political Programme of 1976 not only

charged its foreign missions with “leading an intensified diplomatic offensive” against the political manoeuvres of the Pretoria regime but also of making it “abundantly clear to the world that SWAPO will never stop the armed and political struggle”, at least until the independence of the territory was granted (SWAPO Political Programme 1976, p.7-8 and Dobell 2000, p.57). This, according to Udogu (1980), was done “with the view to bringing pressure to bear on Pretoria and inducing the Republic to withdraw from Namibia ...” (1980, p.117). The final objective was thus the independence of the territory from South African rule.

An organised diplomatic front was however required in order to achieve the aforementioned objectives. Katjavivi (1976) reflects that in order for the movement to “retain and strengthen its position over the manoeuvres of an increasingly desperate enemy, the movement ought to give serious thought to the organisation of its diplomatic activities ...” (1976, p.1). In the 1976 political programme, the Foreign Relations Secretariat of SWAPO is “urged upon to streamline ... foreign missions in different parts of the world for an intensified diplomatic offensive aimed at exposing the current South Africa colonial manoeuvres designed to impose a puppet confederation of Bantustans on our people” (1976, p.7). With the aim of attaining international recognition and independence for Namibia, the Department of Foreign Affairs was “to be the medium of contacts and interaction between SWAPO and foreign governments, national and international organisations” (Udogu, 2012, p.86).

### **6.3 The importance of the Diplomatic Front**

It was in the Political Programme adopted by the South West Africa People's Organisation in 1976 that the importance of the diplomatic front was reflected. The Programme is of great relevance because it was the only one to have been adopted by SWAPO in exile (Dobell 2000). The Political Programme not only reflects the importance of the diplomatic front but also the future objectives of the movement. According to Dobell (2000) "the main purpose of the Political Programme ... was to support SWAPO's new diplomatic initiative – its plans to use the OAU and NAM meetings as a springboard for UN recognition as a government-in-exile having unravelled as a consequence of the crisis, on the one hand, and the resistance for the Western members of the UN Security Council on the other hand" (2000, p.56).

The movement had received recognition from both the OAU and NAM and was afforded the honour of participating in the meetings and discussions of these organisations. Of great importance to SWAPO was that a majority of the members of the OAU and the NAM were members of the UN and could thus discuss matters of relevance to SWAPO at an international arena and more importantly keep the topic of Namibia at the international forefront. Dobell (2000) goes on to write that "the Political Programme must be seen primarily as the final touch to this diplomatic manoeuvring, and not as a statement of political beliefs" (2000, p.57).

The United Nations had been the target of many of SWAPO's diplomatic initiatives. These initiatives were carried out over an extensive period of time. Udogu (2012)

divides this period into three stages: “the Early Stage, the Active Stage and lastly the Recognition Stage” (2012, p.10). The period between 1956 and 1961 is identified by Udogu (2012) as the Early Stage. The author also refers to this stage as the “formative years of SWAPO” in which the movement’s diplomatic policy was in its infancy (Udogu 2012, p.100). The major characteristic of this stage was the movement’s efforts to “bring to the United Nations attention Pretoria’s atrocities in Namibia”; the aim of which was “to galvanise the international community to act decisively and expeditiously in resolving the predicament” (Udogu 2012, p.11).

The Active Stage on the other hand took place between 1962 and 1967. Not only was this “the period in which SWAPO plunged into international politics” but it was also the period in which “SWAPO attempted to formalise its legitimacy within Africa while simultaneously pursuing its diplomatic activities within the United Nations through its petition campaigns” (Udogu, 2012, p.100). It was during this stage that SWAPO projected itself to the international community as being the authentic representative of the Namibian people, voicing the interests and concerns of the people of the territory.

Lastly, the period between 1968 and 1973 served as the Recognition Stage in which “SWAPO intensified its activities in the United Nations and became an active partner in affairs affecting Namibia” (Udogu, 2012, p.100). It was in the recognition stage that a more organised and intensified diplomatic campaign was launched with the creation of a department of foreign affairs and a centralised approach to diplomatic efforts. It was also during this stage that SWAPO achieved its greatest diplomatic

objective which was encompassed in “Res. 3111 of December 12, 1973, which recognised SWAPO as the de jure representative of the Namibian people” (Udogu 2012, p.11). Official recognition led to participation in UN Committees and more importantly participation in the United Nations Council on Namibia. SWAPO’s campaign at the UN was thus about isolating South Africa at the world stage, gaining recognition from the world body as the representative of the Namibian people, gaining support for the armed struggle and finally, independence for the territory of Namibia.

The three stages identified by Udogu (2012) are evidence of the changing nature of SWAPO’s diplomatic campaign. Although the overall objectives of the diplomatic campaign did not change, the efforts and the intensity of the diplomatic efforts changed over the decades. This was also made evident by the changing roles of the representative offices and their Chief Representatives. According to Leys and Saul (1995), “SWAPO continued to have political weight abroad, in large measure because of the increasing effectiveness of its ‘external loop’ of diplomatic representatives ... ‘SWAPO Ambassadors’ were increasingly able to deliver resources and ever enhanced credibility to the movement from networks they have established in their host countries and at the United Nations” (1995, p. 45).

The contacts and relationships that were established by SWAPO’s representatives in both the early stage and the active stage yielded great benefits for the movement during its recognition stage and into the years leading to the independence of Namibia. Muller (2012) states that “SWAPO policy aimed at replacing the

representatives every couple of years...” (2012, p.180), there were thus different representatives in the different missions over the years with some being recalled to serve in positions at the SWAPO provisional headquarters, first in Tanzania then in Zambia and later in Angola.

### **6.3.1 The Diplomatic Front in relation to the Political Front**

Directives for establishing a diplomatic mission were granted by the political leadership of the movement. Thus the function of the Diplomatic front was intertwined with that of the Political front. The Political front was characterised by efforts to mobilise the masses to participate in the liberation struggle and to awaken a political consciousness among the people (SWAPO Political Programme 1976). It however also encompasses the overall political leadership and the role they would play in the attainment of the independence of the territory. Although the audience of the two fronts differed, their objectives were very much similar. For the political front the audience was the national masses both within the country as well as those in exile. For the diplomatic front the audience and the target of their objectives was the international community both countries and international organisations.

Furthermore, the Political Front was responsible for the establishment of provisional headquarters and offices in countries such as Tanzania, Algeria, Egypt, Zambia and Angola whereas the Diplomatic front worked alongside the Political front in the establishment of missions in countries such as England, Sweden, Finland, the United States of America and India, to mentioned but a few. These missions were of

importance to the movement as they served as advocates for SWAPO's cause to the governments, the people and the civil organisations of the countries and regions where they were located (Muller, 2012, p.168). They also served as host to the SWAPO leadership whenever they found themselves in these countries for reasons such as an international conference on Namibia.

The establishment of the UN Institute for Namibia which was piloted by the UN Council for Namibia in 1976 can be counted as a contribution by the diplomatic front to the political front. The Institute which was based in Lusaka, Zambia served as a training ground for future administrators and civil servants. These were drawn from those identified by the political front and went on to serve within the political leadership of the movement.

### **6.3.2 The Diplomatic Front in relation to the Military Front**

From the onset the mission had been to make the internal community aware of the enemy that is South Africa and its illegal governance of Namibia. Saxena (1991) writes that "SWAPO had ... acted upon the principle that the independence of Namibia would have to come through the efforts of Namibians themselves" (1991, p.80). SWAPO thus took its fight as far as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague. Ethiopia and Liberia, African countries that had been members of the League of Nations, had taken the case against South Africa to the world court on behalf of South West Africa/Namibia. The Courts ruling would however prove disappointing leading to the decision to pursue armed struggle. Udogu (2012) notes



that “in truth SWAPO ... confronted South Africa ... diplomatically and later militarily when the ... [diplomatic] approach to resolving the nationhood quandary seemed to be going nowhere (2012, p.6).

SWAPO organised itself for armed struggle, having sent a hand full of cadres for military training in countries such as Algeria and Egypt, who would make up the first soldiers in the ranks of the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). This group of soldiers would launch the armed struggle with the skirmish against the South African security forces in northern Namibia.

The movement arguably started its fight with diplomacy before embarking on the military aspect. Although it was perceived as not producing the desired results, the diplomatic front was, however, not entirely abandoned. “Indeed, because of its presence and activities in Africa, Europe and North America SWAPO was recognised by the UN and OAU for its diplomatic-cum-military struggle to dislodge Pretoria from Namibia” (Udogu 2012, p.83). It was this continued presence in the international arena that led to the recognition of the movement by the OAU and more specifically from the OAU’s Liberation Committee which in turn led to the provision of financial assistance toward the liberation struggle as well as weaponry for the movement, weaponry that would strengthen its military efforts against a stronger opponent (Mushelenga, 2008, p.6).

The diplomatic front’s presence in the international community also proved useful in one other aspect – the provision of travel documents to Namibians in exile. Most if

not all Namibians in exile had left the country without a passport and even if they had tried to obtain a travel document of sorts they would never have received one from the administrators of the territory. This often landed the exiles, including PLAN cadres, the title of a stateless people. The passports were important to PLAN cadres because “South Africa’s campaign was to brand everybody from Namibia terrorist, which made them unacceptable to some countries” (Interview with Ben Amathila, April 29 2013). The cadres needed travel documents in order to attend military training in, for example, the USSR and for transit through Tanzania and Zambia in route to the military camps in Angola. The travel documents were made available to SWAPO by the UN Council for Namibia, which had taken the decision to allow “Namibians to travel throughout the world on United Nations legal documents” (SWAPO Department of Foreign Affairs, 1988).

Armed struggle and the military front were thus not the beginning and the end of the fight for the liberation of the territory but rather a result of the perception of diplomacy as not yielding results. The movement had to withstand negative propaganda and military attacks from the South African regime, while striving to gain friends and support from the international community. It was thus the task of the diplomatic representative to achieve the movement’s objectives in the international arena.

#### **6.4 The evolving nature of SWAPO's diplomatic campaign**

Udogu's (2012) narration of the stages of SWAPO's diplomatic efforts at the UN is evidence of the evolving nature of SWAPO's diplomatic campaign. This evolving nature is not only a result of SWAPO's adaptability but it is also a result of changes in the global environment in which SWAPO exercised its diplomatic initiatives. The aforementioned Internal Court of Justice ruling was one such event, resulting in diplomatic efforts being directed at gaining support for the armed struggle. It is worth noting that although there were changes in the diplomatic initiatives and direction, the overall objectives of the diplomatic front did not change. Another event was the 1974 collapse of the Portuguese empire that led to the independence of Angola. This culminated in the opening of the Namibia-Angola border leading to an increased amount of Namibians in exile. An interview with Amathila revealed that this had an impact on SWAPO's diplomatic efforts. "... the campaign for diplomatic work then became one of not only making people understand the war for liberation, to make people support Namibia's cause for liberation at the UN and all legal frameworks but also to look at the social, economic needs of the Namibians in the camps who swelled the numbers of SWAPO in exile.." (Interview with Ben Amathila, April 29, 2013).

According to Amathila, the wellbeing of Namibians in exile became the responsibility of SWAPO's diplomatic representatives as individuals, organisations and nations had to be convinced to come to the aide of SWAPO and the Namibians in exile who had become the responsibility of SWAPO. Looking after the wellbeing

of Namibians in exile “became an unwritten rule of your role as the diplomat or a representative of the people of Namibia, because the resolutions of the United Nations called on SWAPO to be the representative of all Namibians” (Interview with Ben Amathila, April 29, 2013). This brought the solidarity aspect to SWAPO’s diplomatic campaign aside from the matter of legitimate rule over the territory. Mushelenga (2008) writes that “in addition to students who were members of SWAPO in exile studying in countries where the movement had missions, there were students in Bulgaria, the then Czechoslovakia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Uganda” (2008, p.6).

The movement’s diplomatic initiatives also helped to keep SWAPO in good standing in the international community over the three decades in which the war for liberation was waged, and even in the midst of the crisis that occurred in the 1970s. Udogu (1980) posits that “SWAPO’s ability to do this stems in important degree from its sources of influence, the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations” (1980, p.154). These diplomatic efforts were carried out at the height of the Cold War wherein SWAPO “worked both sides of the Cold War ... winning friends and neutralising enemies internationally in order to sustain a convincing presence at the United Nations ...” (Leys and Saul, 1995, p.3). SWAPO’s participation in the diplomatic process that led to the sovereignty of Namibia not only made its diplomatic campaign successful in terms of alerting the world to the situation in Namibia, but it also served the overall movement by preparing the ground work and preparing an environment in which SWAPO could further its cause.

In the years starting from 1980 leading to independence it is hard to identify SWAPO's exact diplomatic manoeuvres as during this period a great number of players entered the field. The most important of these were the Western Contact Group composed of America, England, France, Canada and Western Germany, who took over negotiations from the UN. Then there were the Frontline States that often acted as a committee of the OAU, and became involved in diplomatic negotiations (especially with conveying the western view to SWAPO).

Lastly, the Cubans who had come to the military aid of the MPLA and eventually Namibia and had been a cause for concern for the Pretoria regime and were thus introduced as a condition in the diplomatic negotiations (Hackland et al 1986, Evans 1984, Redekop 1980). SWAPO representatives were however involved in every stage of the negotiations and through every resolution that was passed in favour of Namibia at the United Nations for the eventual decolonisation of the territory.

## **Chapter 7 – Conclusion**

An attempt is made here, to bring together the observations culminating from the discussion in the foregoing chapters. The history of SWAPO and the diplomatic campaign embarked on by SWAPO traverses through close to three decades in an ever changing international arena. The campaign underwent different stages and initiatives with differing intensities in what Udogu (2012) identified as the Early Stage, the Active Stage and the Recognition Stage. Although Udogu's classification was based on SWAPO's activities at the United Nations, it can also be generalised to the movements overall diplomatic initiative because much of its diplomatic campaign was targeted at the United Nations.

The early stage, which reflects on the diplomatic front's infancy, was the period in which the movement was taking strides onto the international arena. The movement had petitioners at the United Nations and had a hand full of representatives working to make the movement known to the international community. The objective during this stage was to bring to the attention of the United Nations the situation in South West Africa under South African rule. According to Saunders (2007) the intention under the United Nations was that "mandates would become trust territories under the UN until they were led to independence" (2007, p.737). However, South Africa with mandate power over the territory was looking to annex the territory instead of preparing it for self-governance. Apartheid law over the territory had led to difficult living conditions for the inhabitants of the territory along with the segregationist policy that was adhered to by the regime. The petitions that would be written by the

inhabitants of the territory to the United Nations would reflect the objection of the people to such governance. Thus when SWAPO as a movement started to petition and lobby the international community and particularly the United Nations it was doing so on the basis of a foundation laid by those who went before them.

Although there was no formal organisational structure for the pursuit of diplomacy during the early stage, diplomacy was recognised as a means of gaining the attention of the international community while advancing the struggle against South African rule in the territory. SWAPO's faith in diplomacy and especially in the United Nations would however dwindle in 1966, after the ICJ ruling on the case brought before it by Ethiopia and Liberia on behalf of Namibia, resulting in the movements move toward armed struggle. This did not however bring an end to the movement's diplomatic activity as it continued to intensify its diplomatic efforts in the international community with special emphasis on gaining both recognition and support for its liberation struggle.

The Active stage witnessed a rivalry for recognition between SWANU and SWAPO, the two nationalist movements that had emerged from the territory in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The rivalry resulted not only from the inability to fight from a position of unity but also from the need to gain advantage in the international community so as to better position themselves in the fight against South Africa. The mission for SWAPO was to isolate South Africa, who was branding all Namibians in exile as terrorist, in the international arena. The mission was also to gain recognition as the authentic and legal representative of the Namibian people and of the wishes

and aspirations of the people. This constituted the 'Recognition Stage' as identified by Udogu (2012). It was, according to Udogu (1980), through "SWAPO's successful diplomatic actions in Africa [and] the United Nations ... that the group won for itself international recognition ..." (1980, p.90). Recognition for SWAPO would first come from the Organisation of African Unity who, having established a Liberation Committee, aimed to liberate the continent of Africa from colonial rule. Recognition from the OAU led to immense support for SWAPO's armed struggle, on both the continent as well as the international community, especially from the socialist states. The nod of approval from the OAU also led to further recognition of the movement from the United Nations, yielding greater international support for SWAPO.

The establishment of SWAPO's Department of Foreign Affairs resulted from the resolutions adopted at the Tanga Consultative Congress of 1969 and with it came the establishment of an increased number of SWAPO representative missions all over the world. Chief Representatives were appointed to these missions with the task of advancing SWAPO's cause, for the independence of Namibia, in the international community. The representatives were faced with varying challenges, such as the general financing of the mission and the reception from the host government and its people, depending on their area of responsibility. SWAPO's diplomatic representatives had to work both sides of the Cold War without appearing to be in full support of the one or the other.

In the late 1970s the movement found itself allied with the Non-Aligned Movement in the midst of a Cold War. This in itself proved difficult due to South Africa's



continued propaganda against SWAPO in the international community as well as the support the Pretoria regime received from the West. SWAPO's diplomatic policy was thus geared towards fighting colonial rule in the territory while negating the negative sentiments portrayed of the movement by South Africa in the international community.

SWAPO's foreign policy and its diplomatic campaign, although formed in the midst of an ever changing global environment and influenced by varying world events and global players, was formulated to bring about the independence of Namibia. The main objectives of SWAPO's diplomatic campaign were 1) to bring the situation in the territory and South Africa's governance of the territory to the attention of the international community; 2) to gain recognition from the international community and especially from the United Nations as the authentic and legal representative of the Namibian people; 3) to gain support, both moral and financial support, for the armed struggle and lastly 4) to gain independence for the territory of South West Africa/Namibia. The pursuit of diplomacy in the midst of an armed struggle was thus beneficial not only for SWAPO but also to the inhabitants of Africa's last colony and the generations that follow.

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