

Forum: Historical Security Council (HSC)

Issue: Question of Namibia (3 September 1981)

Student Officer: Şems Polat

Position: President Chair

Introduction

During the 1960s, most of Africa's countries had gained independence, except for Namibia. Amidst a savannah, the country is rich in minerals such as uranium, vanadium, lithium, tungsten, as well as diamonds; and this motivated South Africa to try and hold on to Namibia. The South African government also believed that the guerrilla war in Angola would be kept further away from South Africa, as Namibia would act as a buffer zone. With the apartheid laws that prevent black Namibians from having any political rights and social freedom, white South Africa's rule exploits both the mineral resources and humans of Namibia.

With the formation of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), a Black African Nationalist movement sparked, with its agenda being the struggle for independence, and political and social freedom. Having the support from all the local tribes, SWAPO caught the attention of the South African Government. Later, SWAPO's People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) was established, and an armed insurrection that is still ongoing started.

Definition of Key Terms

Guerilla Warfare:

Guerilla warfare is often used by small-scaled irregular forces that are independent of the government, aiming to disrupt the military operations of their enemies through carrying military operations primarily directed towards causing damage to their enemies. Guerilla warfare often appeals to the element of surprise in their attacks with the goal of avoiding casualties. For this purpose, they use methods such as but not limited to sabotage, propaganda, and assassination.

Annexation:

Annexation is defined as the possession taken of a piece of land or a country, usually by force or without permission.

Apartheid:

Apartheid is a policy of the South African government, segregating the white and non-white people of South Africa, as well as South West Africa. Even though racial discrimination towards the non-white populations existed before this policy, its legislation intensified it. Black Africans were classified as Bantu, mixed races were classified as Coloured, Indian and Pakistani people were classified as Asian. Based on their classification according to this policy, people's rights to work, receive education, and vote differ, limiting the facilities and services they shall benefit from.

Neocolonial expansionism:

According to the Encyclopedia of Britannica, neocolonial expansionism, or neocolonialism, refers to the control of less-developed countries by more developed countries in an indirect way. The term was first used after World War II, referring to the former colonial powers that continued to exploit other countries after they had gained independence.

General Overview

German South West Africa was established in 1884. After World War I, the League of Nations gave South West Africa, formerly a German colony, to the United Kingdom as a mandate under the administration of South Africa. When the National Party won the 1948 election in South Africa and subsequently introduced apartheid legislation, these laws were applied as well to South West Africa. It was considered the de facto fifth province of South Africa. South West Africa People's Organisation, SWAPO, was founded on 19 April 1960 as the successor of the Ovamboland People's Organization. Leaders renamed the party to show that it represented all Namibians.

During 1962, SWAPO emerged as the dominant nationalist organization for the Namibian people. It co-opted other groups such as the South West Africa National Union (SWANU), and later in 1976 the Namibia African People's Democratic Organisation. From around the 1950s, liberation struggles gained traction around the African continent, and many countries started gaining independence from their colonial masters. South West Africa was no exception, and the desire for independence was spurred on by South Africa's apartheid policies which held sway over the vast deserts and savannas of South West Africa. SWAPO used guerrilla tactics to fight the South African Defence Force. On 26 August 1966, the first major clash of the conflict took place, when a unit of the South African Police, supported by the South African Air Force, exchanged fire with SWAPO forces. This date is generally regarded as the start of what became known in South Africa as the Border War and was closely intertwined with the Angolan Civil War.

Following several decades of unsuccessful petitioning through the United Nations and the International Court of Justice for Namibian independence, SWAPO formed the PLAN in 1962 with

material assistance from the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, and sympathetic African states such as Tanzania, Ghana, and Algeria. Fighting broke out between PLAN and the South African authorities in August 1966. One important factor in the fight for independence was the 1971-72 Namibian contract workers strike, which fought for the elimination of the contract labor system, a part of the apartheid laws, and independence from South Africa. In 1972, the United Nations General Assembly recognized SWAPO as the 'sole legitimate representative' of Namibia's people, and the Norwegian government began giving aid directly to SWAPO in 1974.

Angola got into play in the Namibian War of Independence, as the MPLA offered SWAPO bases in Angola for launching attacks against the South African military. The country of Angola had gained its independence on 11 November 1975 following its war for independence, and the leftist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), supported by Cuba and the Soviet Union, had come to power.

As the tensions further arose, in 1978, SWAPO had around 18,000 combatants and could launch 800 raids into Namibia. The South Africans responded by attacking the rebel bases across the border including a retaliatory strike into Zambia which forced the Zambians to be less willing to support SWAPO. South Africa's raid into Angola drove the rebels back 200 miles and did significant damage. The war intensified and South African and Angolan forces fought their first battle in 1981. Two Angolan brigades including their Russian advisors were destroyed. Approximately 10,000 guerrillas were killed with a loss of around 800 South Africans. SWAPO then resorted to guerilla tactics.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO):

SWAPO was founded on 19 April 1960 as a part of the liberalization movement of South West Africa, aiming to unite Namibians. The organization quickly became the main organization that worked towards the independence of Namibia, and the UN recognized SWAPO as the representative of Namibians in 1973. When the United Nations voted for the independence of South West Africa from South African authorities, naming the region as Namibia, South African forces refused to do so. Upon this dissension, SWAPO began using armed forces by founding the South West Africa Liberation Army (SWALA), which later turned into the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN).

People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN):

PLAN is the military wing of SWAPO. It was founded by the name of the South West Africa Liberation Army, which later was changed to the People's Liberation Army of Namibia after SWALA's failure in defeating South African forces. PLAN is majorly funded by the Soviet Union, along with the support of Cuban forces.

South African Defence Force (SADF):

SADF is the defense force of South Africa, connected to their Department of Defense. The organization has 6 compartments: finance, logistics, intelligence, personnel, operations, and planning. Due to the UN sanctions imposed on South Africa, SADF units began developing their arms industry, producing weaponry, such as but not limited to rocket launchers and missiles. One of their key aims was to protect the apartheid and fight those who were against it.

Timeline of Events

April 19, 1960	SWAPO was founded as a successor of the Ovamboland People's Organization, leading the advocacy for the independence of Namibia from South African rule. The organization established bases in Angola.
1975 (ongoing)	South Africa began intervening with anti-SWAPO groups in Angola in order to diminish SWAPO's presence in Angola.
1975	The Angolan Civil War began.
1977	SWAPO launched guerilla attacks from their bases in Angola against South African forces in Namibia.
4 May, 1978	SADF launched a military attack on SWAPO forces, also known as Operation Reindeer, against their presence in Angola.
September 29, 1978	United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 was adopted

UN Involvement and Relevant Treaties

The United Nations has been heavily involved in the Namibian Civil War. To begin with, the United Nations Security Council has passed several resolutions concerning Namibia, declaring South Africa's presence in Namibia illegal, and encouraging the independence of the nation.

[UNSC Resolution 282](#): This resolution is on the question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa

[UNSC Resolution 428](#): This resolution is on the Angolan involvement with the conflict

[Security Council Resolution 435 \(1978\): Namibia | UN Peacemaker](#): This Security Council resolution calls for the withdrawal of South African forces from Namibia and for the transfer of power to the people of Namibia. This resolution also establishes a United Nations Transition Assistance Group for a period of up to 12 months in order to ensure the independence of Namibia through free elections under the supervision and control of the United Nations.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Previous attempts to resolve the Namibian War of Independence are mostly done by the United Nations. The organization has played, and still plays, a crucial role in mediating the conflict and negotiations with its parties. Bilateral negotiations between South Africa and various liberation movements, particularly SWAPO, were conducted by the UN, helping to build a basis for possible future agreements. Other regional parties, such as Angola and Zambia, played a significant role as well. Regional mediation efforts involved a range of stakeholders, including neighboring countries, regional organizations, and international partners. These mediation efforts helped address the causes of the conflict and allowed for cooperation among neighboring countries, contributing to stability in the region. In conclusion, previous attempts to resolve the Namibian civil war involved a combination of diplomatic efforts, including UN involvement, multiple negotiations, and regional mediation. These efforts were effective in bringing an end to the conflict, promoting inclusivity, fostering sustainable peace, and laying the groundwork for Namibian independence.

Possible Solutions

As the international attention on Namibia's struggle for independence has been increasing over the years with more parties getting involved, increased efforts in mediation by neutral parties, such as the United Nations, has been getting even more important. While seeking the full independence of Namibia comes afterwards, the first steps should be forcing South Africa to consider implementing political reforms within Namibia, granting greater autonomy. Initiating an inclusive governance that would have both parties' representatives could help with a peaceful resolution. Moreover, both sides

could agree to a temporary ceasefire to allow for negotiations without the threat of violence. If need be, the international community could impose targeted sanctions on South Africa in order to pressure them into negotiating.

Notes from the Chair

Esteemed Delegates,

The question of Namibia is not just about the active forces in the field but also about convincing the stakeholders who are favoring differing sides. Furthermore, the role of regional actors and neighboring states cannot be understated. Their support and engagement regarding possible negotiations and temporary ceasefire is immense. You are encouraged to do further research regarding the issue. I look forward to fruitful debates and outcomes during the conference towards resolving this problem.

Bibliography

Berat, Lynn. "Namibia: The Road to Independence and the Problem of Succession of States."

Journal of Political Science *Journal of Political Science*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1990, p. 10, [core.ac.uk/download/pdf/288182894.pdf](https://www.core.ac.uk/download/pdf/288182894.pdf).

Beyer, Greg. "The South African Border War: Considered to Be South Africa's "Vietnam.""

TheCollector, 22 Nov. 2022,

www.thecollector.com/south-african-border-war-vietnam/.

Border War – SASFA. www.recce.co.za/border-war/.

Gleijeses, Piero. "Cuba and the Independence of Namibia." *Cold War History*, vol. 7, no. 2,

May 2007, pp. 285–303, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682740701284215>. Accessed 25 Nov. 2019.

Liebenberg, Ian, and Richard Dale. "Review of the Namibian War of Independence,

1966–1989: Diplomatic, Economic and Military Campaigns, DaleRichard." *War in History*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2017, pp. 252–254, www.jstor.org/stable/26059837. Accessed 23 Mar. 2024.

"Namibia - the Road to Namibia | Britannica." *Www.britannica.com*,

www.britannica.com/place/Namibia/The-road-to-Namibia.

Saunders, Christopher. “Namibia’s Liberation Struggle and Resistance: A Critical View of

Some Recent Perspectives.” *Historia*, vol. 60, no. 2, 2015, pp. 201–211,

<https://doi.org/10.17159/2309-8392/2015/v60n2a10>.

“The Namibian Struggle for Independence – 1966 – 1990 – a Historical Background | South

African History Online.” *Sahistory.org.za*, 2015,

www.sahistory.org.za/article/namibian-struggle-independence-1966-1990-historical-b

[ackground](http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/namibian-struggle-independence-1966-1990-historical-b).