

Namibia's Foreign Policy: Fit for the 21st Century?

*Reflections on the role of the
media and public diplomacy*

Discussion paper



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About the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)

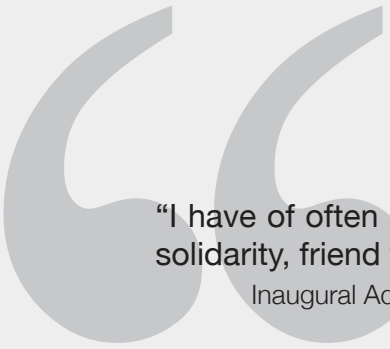
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About the Namibia Media Trust

The objective of the Namibia Media Trust (NMT) is to further the principles of press freedom and freedom of expression as well as access to information in Africa and beyond.



“I have often said that Namibia is a child of international solidarity, friend to all and enemy to none.”

Inaugural Address by President Hage Geingob, March 21 2015

“The realm of diplomacy ... is no longer an exclusive domain of governments. There are other actors on the national, regional and international scene. Public opinion is increasingly shaping foreign policy, hence the need for the Government of the Republic of Namibia to constantly communicate her position on domestic, regional and international issues.”

Speech to a meeting of the Namibian Editors' Forum by Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, August 12 2015.

“Public diplomacy may be defined as the conduct of international relations by governments through public communications media and through dealings with a wide range of non-governmental entities (political parties, corporations, trade associations, labour unions, educational institutions, religious organisations, ethnic groups, and so on including influential individuals) for the purpose of influencing the politics and actions of other governments.”

Alan K. Henrikson, Professor of Diplomatic History, Tufts University, Massachusetts, April 2005

“Soft power is determined not only by economic strength, but also by the ability of states to produce knowledge and influence thinking.”

Jakkie Cilliers, Executive Director, Institute for Security Studies, South Africa, quoted in Africa Business Magazine, November 12 2015

“In the coming year we will review our foreign policy with a view to move from the traditional foreign affairs view to international relations and cooperation. In an integrated world, there are no foreigners. Our focus will, therefore, be on relationship building and cooperation with our global friends in the context that Namibia is a child of international solidarity, a friend to all and an enemy to none.”

Harambee Prosperity Plan, Chapter 7, April 2016



Background¹

A country's foreign policy is the strategy used to deal with other states and with issues that may arise in the global arena. Article 96 of Namibia's Constitution deals with Foreign Relations and states:

The State shall endeavour to ensure that in its international relations it:

- (a) adopts and maintains a policy of non-alignment;*
- (b) promotes international cooperation, peace and security;*
- (c) creates and maintains just and mutually beneficial relations among nations;*
- (d) fosters respect for international law and treaty obligations;*
- (e) encourages the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.*

The only detailed foreign policy document produced for public consumption since independence is the 2004 White Paper on 'Namibia's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Management'. Foreign policy aims to be an outward extension of internal policies, according to the 2004 White Paper. More recently, the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation has also produced a Strategic Action Plan 2013-2017 that lays out its goals for the immediate future.

The size and scope of Namibia's foreign ministry has increased substantially since independence, as has the capacity of its diplomatic missions. Namibia soon after independence had 17 embassies and high commissions and today has close to 30, well distributed across the world, reflecting Namibia's interests and historical ties.

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After independence Namibia understandably emphasised African and regional relationships. On April 1 1990 Namibia became a member of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, now called the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). Namibia also focused on bilateral

relationships with its neighbouring states, establishing protocols and agreements on defence and security, education and culture, water and electricity and general cooperation.

SADC offers Namibia a chance to generate interdependency and cooperation with its neighbours. Membership of SADC also creates a forum through which region-wide challenges can be tackled, including the management of shared water-courses, transport and communications, energy and food security. Economic integration, although still in its early phases in southern Africa, holds great possibilities for Namibia to benefit from a market of over 250 million people and negotiate better trading terms with the rest of the world. Through being at the heart of SADC, Namibia, as a country with a small population, can amplify its voice and influence. Although SADC is still a long way from achieving its potential - particularly in terms of developing free trade, promoting human security and adopting common standards on human rights, it remains a crucial means of developing regional capacity and finding common purpose.

Namibia has also been a member of the African Union or its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), since independence. While the OAU gained traction during the post-World War II period of decolonisation, it has since redefined its purpose by focusing on its 'Second Phase' of African-led development through intra-African trade and development.

As would be expected, Namibia's foreign policy is influenced by its involvement with and membership of these organisations. In regard to the AU, Namibia has repeatedly supported the AU in calling for the restructuring of the United Nations, in particular by seeking the abolition of veto rights and demanding better African representation on the Security Council. Namibia has also honoured the African Union's doctrine of African Solidarity, at times to Namibia's detriment.

The promotion of the AU and African unity started during President Sam Nujoma's time in office. During his time in office, practices such as flying the AU flag next to the Namibian one and the singing of the AU anthem alongside the Namibian national anthem were introduced. This demonstrates the influence of pan-African solidarity on the foreign and also domestic policies of Namibia.

Article 96 of the Constitution calls for the maintenance of a non-alignment policy in terms of foreign relations. While Namibia remains a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, the global environment in which this grouping was established has changed significantly since the end of the Cold War. The original notion of non-alignment still has to be re-interpreted to fit the contemporary world. In the case of Namibia, the

¹ This briefing paper was written by Jessica Brown, Gwen Lister and Graham Hopwood to promote discussion at the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation's Foreign Policy Review Conference, July 25-19 2016. It is a shortened and adapted version of a briefing paper, 'New Government, New Foreign Policy?' by Jessica Brown to be published by the Institute for Public Policy Research later in 2016.

principle of non-alignment has sometimes been used somewhat interchangeably with non-intervention to justify inaction as on the Human Rights Council for example. More beneficially, due to this policy Namibia has developed cordial relations with states of various backgrounds and across ideological divides.

2004 White Paper on Foreign Policy

In 2004 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a White Paper entitled ‘Namibia’s Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Management’. This document outlined the principles and goals of Namibian foreign policy as well as the methodology to be used in attempting to achieve these goals. Twelve years later, the White Paper remains the main written source for policy analysts who want to determine what Namibia wants to achieve through its foreign policy. The White Paper states that the key objectives of Namibian foreign policy are to:

- *Safeguard Namibia’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity. This is the first principle and the central objective of the policy and, indeed, of [Namibia’s] diplomacy.*
- *Promote Namibia’s economic growth and development. While this is primarily a domestic task, the external challenge lies in the creation of conditions that facilitate the fulfilment of these goals. The ministry augments domestic efforts by projecting the country as a peaceful and stable place, indeed, a conducive business environment and by mobilising regional and international co-operation with a view to expanding the nation’s economic space.*
- *Foster international peace and security, and regional harmony, through active support for collective initiatives and effective multilateralism. This includes Namibia’s participation in United Nations peace-keeping missions, involving Namibian defence units abroad.*
- *Build a positive image of Namibia abroad, through concerted actions with other agencies of the government so as to reaffirm the good reputation of the country, and to attract to it economic partners as well as tourists and other visitors.*
- *Protect and assist Namibian citizens abroad, including students and other nationals living or visiting other countries for business, leisure or for any other purpose. This is, of course, a classic consular function; and*
- *Optimise a modern and flexible diplomatic apparatus that has the capacity to implement Namibia’s foreign policy.*

A central tenet of Namibian foreign policy as highlighted in the White Paper is Namibia’s support for Pan-Africanism and specifically the consolidation of African democracy, peace and sustainable development through intra-African trade and support networks. The White Paper states:

The principles of Pan-Africanism, freedom and political independence, economic development, the politics of non-alignment, and African unity, have had compelling influence on the evolution of the policy. [...] commitment to the unity of Africa is one of the key planks of Namibia’s foreign policy.

The White Paper also highlights other significant bilateral relationships that Namibia enjoys and emphasises the importance and advantages of having good relationships with other states and with international organisations. The White Paper notes however, that while,

the country attaches high value to the decisions of the United Nations and other international organisations, particularly the fraternity of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (now the African Union) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as well as the Non Aligned Movement, national interests constitute an overriding factor in our bilateral relations, allowing Namibia to exercise its sovereign right when conducting business within the parameters of these relations.”

Namibia also remains committed to multilateralism, according to the White Paper. As stated, “Namibia joined the international community at a time when multilateral tasks of diplomacy had proliferated considerably”. While Namibia is keenly aware of the positive effects that multilateral relations can have on

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global issues there is a danger that Namibia with its relatively limited diplomatic capacity could find itself overburdened with the number of multilateral issues it faces.

The White Paper makes clear that: “Namibia’s policy regarding multilateral institutions has focused on effective articulation of the country’s specific needs in areas like health, agriculture, metrology, maritime affairs, education, science and technology, the environment and industrialisation.”

When the White Paper was produced Namibia was still considered an economically less developed country and therefore Namibia’s attitude towards these institutions was often marked with the need to procure aid as former Minister of Foreign Affairs Theo-Ben, Gurirab declared at the 55th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2000:

“Member states must forge a new global partnership between the wealthy and powerful nations and those whose present circumstances leave them mired in the seemingly intractable maze of a merry-go-round type of development. The North must be gracious and generous and give what has been acquired from global resources to assist poor and weak countries to help propel them into the orbit of sustainable and irreversible social and economic growth.”

Further areas of multilateralism, as highlighted in the White Paper, which remain applicable are nuclear disarmament, to which Namibia is still committed, the Commonwealth of which Namibia is an active member, and issues of the environment in which Namibia has the potential to be a global leader. The importance of South/South cooperation is touched on in the paper. However, the extent to which states in the global south are cooperating has increased since 2004.

The White Paper has not been revisited or updated in the intervening period - resulting in a situation where the overhaul of Namibia’s foreign policy is long overdue.

While there are sections of the White Paper that largely remain relevant, some of it is obsolete. Written in 2004, the White Paper was put together in the years shortly after the 9/11 attacks on the US and the consequent ‘War on Terror’, which resulted in major military interventions, by the West in Iraq and Afghanistan. Any new white or green paper on Namibia’s foreign policy would have to incorporate responses to the 2008 global economic crisis, the ‘Arab Spring’ and its aftermath, heightened instability in the Middle East including the emergence of ISIS, the Russian annexation of the Crimea, North Korea’s nuclear weapons ambitions, growing concern about the impacts of climate change, the growth of social media, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and now the development of the Sustainable Development Goals, among many other issues.

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The constant updating of foreign policy positions is vital for Namibia’s diplomatic work and also for its security. In addition, they have a knock-on effect on domestic policy. For example Namibia’s anti terror legislation was cobbled together in great haste under the pressure of sanctions and, as a result is inadequate in several respects and could pose a threat to civil liberties². It is important that many other policies - including those on trade, security, defence, tourism, and economic development - are integrated with Namibia’s foreign policy

The then Ministry of Foreign Affairs produced a five-year action plan in 2013-2014 that lays out precise focus areas and strategic objectives for the Ministry to work towards. This document in some ways provides up to date guidance in the place of a White or Green paper. However, the document is brief and lacks practical details of how objectives are to be achieved.

This document is based on the principles laid down in the 2004 White Paper and while it ties foreign policy objectives to NDP4 and updates Namibia’s general goals to ‘enhance external relationships’ and ‘promote Namibia’s interests’, it lacks specifics as to how desired outcomes can be achieved.

Economic Diplomacy

Since the White Paper was published 12 years ago, economic diplomacy has continued to be a dominant theme in Namibian foreign policy as emphasised at the Heads of Mission Conference in 2014 that had the theme ‘Enhancing Economic Diplomacy in Pursuance of Namibia’s Foreign Policy’. Emphasis is put on the importance of economic diplomacy to promote economic development within Namibia, as a means to boost the economy, create jobs and bring in foreign currency. The White Paper states that “countries

² ‘Rush and Ill-Considered; Namibia’s Anti-Terror Law’, IPPR, June 2015

which fail to take part in [international commerce] or shut themselves out of it behind closed borders will find it extremely difficult to overcome economic stagnation and the majority of their citizens will thus continue to remain in poverty”.

The White Paper emphasises that the Government of Namibia gives responsibility to its diplomats and foreign missions to actively promote Namibia as a trading partner and a destination for tourism and investment. The Namibian diplomatic corps are advised to gather economic intelligence and seek out possible business ventures and deals that could benefit the country.

On paper economic diplomacy reads like an obvious means of securing investment. However, complexities arise which can have a detrimental effect on the developing country, an example of which can be seen in Namibia’s relationship with China.

The White Paper states: “Our country has opted to pursue an outward-looking strategy for economic growth and development. Export-push is a central element of that strategy of economic development. Exports, and especially manufactured, non-traditional products, are key to expansion of the country’s economy.”

Foreign Policy in the Era of Harambee

The Harambee Prosperity Plan launched in April 2016 includes as its seventh pillar - International Relations and Cooperation. The plan emphasises the idea that Namibia should be a friend to all and an enemy to none, as well as the importance of solidarity with the oppressed, as encapsulated in the following quotations.

“The International Community midwifed our birthing into sovereignty and we are a true product of international solidarity with the spirit of Pan Africanism. When we were oppressed, our friends in the world stood by us in solidarity, supporting us with food, shelter, clothing, education and training to enable us to self-govern when the time arrived.”

“Namibia will never feel free until all the oppressed peoples of the world are politically free.”

‘In the coming year we will review our foreign policy with a view to move from the traditional foreign affairs view to international relations and cooperation. In an integrated world, there are no foreigners. Our focus will, therefore, be on relationship building and cooperation with our global friends in the context that Namibia is a child of international solidarity, a friend to all and an enemy to none.’

Government stresses the importance of friendship between states while making clear such relations should be mutually beneficial. This strong emphasis on solidarity among states reflects the pre-independence period when Swapo was dependent on the goodwill and practical support of many countries.

However, as Swapo well knows, there were also countries that gave tacit and sometimes more explicit support to apartheid South Africa or simply paid lip service to the issue of liberation in southern Africa.

There is an obvious tension between being a ‘friend to all’ and identifying with oppressed peoples. As a riposte to the kind of thinking expressed in the Harambee Plan, Aristotle is reputed to have said that a “friend to all is friend to none”. There is a danger that expressions of global friendship will be meaningless unless Namibia takes clear positions on certain situations such as gross human rights violations. Keeping quiet in the name of friendship, whether such ties are historic or recent, is not really an option in 21st century diplomacy. Choosing to not to take a stand can make situations worse and have the effect of rendering Namibia as irrelevant on the world stage. By the same token, referring to ‘quiet diplomacy’ when asked about crises in neighbouring countries - is not adequate. The public need to know what has been achieved and can be achieved - even while recognising that some diplomacy takes place behind closed doors.

There are three recent examples of how Namibian foreign policy appeared to get it wrong. Firstly, a recent failure to understand the full meaning of various UN Security Council Resolutions against North Korea threatened to bring Namibia’s international standing into disrepute. This tended to indicate that Namibia’s diplomats at the UN were not doing their job in terms of making clear to senior officials and politicians in Windhoek what the ramifications of certain UN positions were on Namibia. Secondly, it could have been that warning signals were ignored for political reasons. If this was the case, such an approach was inadvisable since Namibia’s position that we shared ‘historical ties’ with North Korea was incompatible with the positions that the international community, as expressed through the UN Security Council, was taking.

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Such a scenario - in which Namibia received bad international press - could have been avoided if Namibia had a clear foreign policy towards countries such as North Korea and, in particular, UN resolutions relating to Pyongyang.

A second example would be Namibia's strong condemnation of the International Criminal Court (ICC), particularly the Court's power to act against serving presidents. According to President Geingob, "No institution or country can dictate to Africans who and by whom they should be governed ... the International Criminal Court must therefore stay out of Kenya's domestic affairs." In a speech at the 2014 AU summit (which was released but not delivered), the President argued, "when one creates something to be an asset but later on it becomes an abomination, you have the right to quit since it has ceased serving its intended purpose." This would appear to place regional and African solidarity above the need for accountability for human rights abuses - for it is surely possible for sitting heads of state to be responsible for gross human rights abuses. Why should serving elected politicians have impunity in such cases? In comments to the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), the President appeared to suggest that immunity from prosecution should be extended to former African presidents as well as serving ones: "We should respect African former leaders, why should we humiliate our former presidents, and more so, the sitting ones? A president is still a president."³ The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation has pointed out that an African Criminal Court would be a preferred option for dealing with gross human rights abuses on the continent. This is a good point but progress towards setting up African human rights tribunals and courts has been woefully slow. Any proposed withdrawal from the Treaty of Rome, which set up the ICC, should be considered carefully in the light of the Harambee Plan's commitment to Namibia "remaining a respectable and trusted member of the international community". But perhaps more fundamentally, the debate over whether or not to stay in the ICC should be seen through the prism of Namibia's Constitution and particularly its commitment to human rights. There may also be other ways of expressing dissatisfaction with the operations of the ICC, other than complete withdrawal.

If Namibia wants to maintain its policy of non-alignment it would be better advised to adopt an approach based on Lord Palmerston's famous dictum: "Nations have no permanent friends or allies, they only have permanent interests" ...

A third example of where Namibia has failed to live up to its constitutional values is during its two-year stint on the UN Human Rights Council which ends at the close of 2016. An article in *Insight* magazine claimed that "Namibia is one of the most passive [UNHRC member states] ever"⁴. How can Namibia claim to be neutral on human rights issues when such values are entrenched in the Namibian Constitution?

Namibia's own existence came about due to states that were willing to take sides on an issue of international concern. Choosing not to take a stand does not necessarily improve diplomatic relations and can have the opposite effect.

In response to the criticism of inactivity on the Human Rights Council, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation, Selma Ashipala-Musavyi, explained that, "Namibia, as a matter of principle, does not participate in country-specific United Nations agenda items since we believe that the highly selective and subjective naming and shaming of certain countries is not conducive to international cooperation and collective process."⁵

In the case of Palestine, Namibia firmly, and repeatedly states its support for the independent and self-determination of the Palestinian territories, and in regards to the Palestine question, votes accordingly. "The fundamental point here" writes Ashipala-Musavyi "is that the country-specific resolutions under agenda item 4 concern the internal affairs of sovereign states, whereas Israel/Palestine and the occupied territories under agenda item 7 remain an international issue of the entire United Nations." There is a similar consistency and willingness to take a public stance on the issue of Western Sahara.

If Namibia wants to maintain its policy of non-alignment it would be better advised to adopt an approach based on Lord Palmerston's famous dictum: "Nations have no permanent friends or allies, they only have permanent interests"⁶ which would provide for more flexibility within an overall foreign policy framework.

³ 'President Geingob says Rome Statute is used to hound African presidents', *NBC New*, 17 June 2015

⁴ "Foreign Policy Fail", *Insight Namibia*, 6th April 2015

⁵ Letter to the editor, *Insight Namibia*, June 2015

⁶ Henry Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston; Prime Minister of Great Britain 1855-1858 and 1859-1865

The Media and Foreign Affairs Policy

The question that also needs to be posed is: what is the role of the media in the outline of future foreign policy, in the implementation thereof, and in holding government to account in its application as well as its role in driving political responses

Briefly, up to now foreign affairs has been a somewhat opaque area in which there has been very little transparency about Namibia's stance on various international issues. Apart from being asked to cover press releases, speeches and announcements, as well as coverage of diplomatic visits both here and abroad, which could be described as public relations activities, the media have had very little coherent insight on what is happening behind the scenes. Added to this, there is scant public interest in Namibia's role internationally. The people are more invested in the day-to-day bread-and-butter politics at home, than they are in issues like the substance of Namibia's relations with North Korea for example, which is justified on the basis of who were the Swapo allies during the struggle era. But little historical unpacking has been done on these claims, even by the media.

In a presentation on Media as a Driving Force in International Politics: The CNN Effect and Related Debates by Piers Robinson (Review of International Studies 25), it is argued that while the new media environment has the potential to empower non elites, public and pressure groups to challenge those in political power, governments themselves are not passive and impotent. Even in the era of the internet governments have considerable influence over how issues are framed and what issues are on the agenda. Along with the passing of the Cold War era, The CNN Effect, where especially television coverage of humanitarian crises – largely through the power of images -impelled intervention, had given rise to the notion that media were at the centre of an emerging doctrine of humanitarian involvement in which sovereignty was no longer sacrosanct. It came to be understood that mainstream media in general were having an increased effect on foreign policy formulation.

But a lot has changed since the 1990s where the CCN Effect was credited with the “shift from a statist international society, in which the doctrine of non-intervention prevailed, to a more cosmopolitan international society in which justice was allowed to trump order.” (Piers Robinson)

If one can draw here from the example of the US, it is true to say that most media there, a decade later, fell victim to the campaign by both US and British governments to persuade the world that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction, and in this way both governments were very successful in persuading most citizens that Iraq possessed such weaponry and that Hussein was linked with Islamic fundamentalists. It was of, course, a lie.

While what was termed the CCN Effect of the 1990s highlighted the ability of media to shape policy responses during international crises, and still does so especially with respect to issues such as aid delivery, the question as to whether media still continue to be able to drive high-level decision making is more open to question.

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Old liberation era alliances have tended to drive Namibia's foreign policy and Swapo's membership of the Non-Aligned Movement (now largely defunct) since Independence. But there is no human rights-based foreign policy. This has meant continuing close ties between longstanding African rulers, such as Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and others. And so on political, humanitarian and/or social crises (the ongoing one in Zimbabwe for example), Namibia remains silent and fails to express concerns about the abuse of rights in several countries on the continent. While media have called government to account on several of these, the decision to go to war in the DRC on the side of Laurent Kabila, the close relations with Nigerian autocrat San Abacha, etc, the ruling party has not been moved. Further afield close relations with undemocratic China and North Korea have also been questioned, but government has remained staunch in their defence of these relationships.

Through media pressure and questioning about the North Korea ties, including revelations of the building of a factory for munitions, along with pressure from the UN, Namibia has been pressured to change its stance and cooperation on military projects.

What could be done by government, in terms of Harambee and the new spirit of openness and transparency, is to similarly demystify their foreign relations policies, so that Namibians also feel more involved in this critical area in the global age. This should include policies that are more clearly spelled out. i.e. if one looks at the controversial reparations issue, the government approach to its German counterpart has not been clear, which in turn results in confusion on the home front. What precisely is our policy on this

subject? As far as one is able to establish government has taken the position that development aid, spread across all sectors and groups, is the way to go, and they have also agreed with the German government about rejecting cash payouts to the descendants of victims of genocide. Whether groups demanding both an apology as well as cash reparations are aware of this, is not clear. And neither has government been overt in saying that this is their official position.

An area which members of the public are quick to criticise on social media, for example, is the fact that government was immediate with its condemnation of the recent attack in Nice, France, and yet fail to react with similar alacrity – or belatedly or not at all - when there are like terrorist attacks on the African continent i.e. the Garissa attack in Kenya. What, therefore, does this say about Namibia's foreign policy?

What is Namibia's international stance on LGBTI issues for example? Namibia abstained on a recent UN Human Rights Council vote regarding the appointment of a special investigator.

Zimbabwe, Zambia (on the eve of elections), Uganda, Burundi, The Gambia, etc are or have recently been experiencing social upheavals and human rights abuses, but our government is silent. It would be in keeping with Harambee's statement about Namibia never feeling free unless the oppressed peoples of the world are politically free to ensure foreign policy takes cognisance of human rights violations the world over, and on the continent in particular.



If sovereignty rests with the people and not with the government in power, then government should be looking to attain the consent of the people for its actions in order to remain in power, including in the area of international relations. Because foreign policy issues are more complex than domestic ones, it makes it more difficult for public to identify with these areas, and so it is important that foreign policy makers take media into account when crafting policies

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Namibia's achievements on rankings like Reporters without Borders should not simply be a public relations effort, but should be taken up within bodies like the AU and SADC so that media freedom standards are raised throughout the region and our government reacts against instances of impunity when the lives of journalists are violently taken

Namibia could also make more of Namibia's generally good record on media freedom, as indicated by various international rankings including Reporters without Borders, to project the country as a good example that other countries could emulate. While there is no room for complacency on media freedom it is also true that Namibian journalists are not really free while their colleagues suffer in places like Angola, Zambia, Uganda and Ethiopia. Therefore, stressing Namibia's

Public Diplomacy

Definitions of public diplomacy over the past 50 years have tended to be drawn from discussion about US foreign policy. They involve creating an image of America abroad - which includes cultural and educational outreach as well as development aid. Namibia is not a world superpower like the US, but can still think of how it can reset its policies and ambitions in a way that only make Namibia a good example and potentially inspirational role model in Africa and internationally. Namibia needs to come to its own definition of public diplomacy and work out ways in which it can be practically applied. This can include Namibia's record of progress, examples of transparency and accountability, as well as cultural, sporting and educational exchanges.

President Hage Geingob has urged Namibia's diplomats to 'sell' Namibia's advantages and success stories internationally. There is no doubt that Namibia is doing well according to several international surveys and assessments, such as on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, while we have improved on anti-graft ratings like Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index in recent years. However, there are further steps that government can take in order to make even clearer Namibia's commitment to transparency and accountability. Namibia's decision in July 2016 to join the African Peer Review Mechanism is highly welcome. This provides useful monitoring tool for governance across Africa. Government should now consider joining other established transparency initiatives such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which sets governance norms and standards in the mining sector, and the Open Government Partnership, an international plan for accountable and responsive governance which now 70 governments as members.

According to Jill A. Schuker (former Senior Director for Public Affairs at the US National Security Council), public diplomacy means "effectively communicating with publics around the globe - to understand,

value and even emulate America's vision and ideas; historically one of America's most effective weapons of outreach, persuasion and policy."

Namibia should think about public diplomacy in this manner - replacing 'America's vision and ideas' with 'Namibia's vision and ideas'. We need to use our best examples - as a well-governed nation with responsible policies - to reach out and persuade others beyond our borders. But we can only do this if we continue to make significant advances in the quality of our governance. Encouragingly, some of the steps towards this advancement, in terms of greater accountability and transparency, are outlined in the Harambee Plan, which places a strong emphasis on effective governance. In short, in order to sell our game we need to first raise our game.

Foreign Ministry Inclusivity

Under the Geingob Presidency there is a drive to form a more productive relationship with the Namibian public. The renamed Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation has responded to this drive. On August 12 2015 Minister Nandi-Ndaitwah held a meeting with editors of media houses across the country and praised the important role that the media plays and the benefits of a vibrant civil society. As part of her speech she acknowledged the need for the 'free flow of information' between the government and the press and pledged to improve communications. She stated that:

"Today, the realm of diplomacy, which is the medium of interaction between and among states, is no longer an exclusive domain of governments. There are other actors on the national, regional and international scene. Public opinion is increasingly shaping foreign policy, hence the need of the Government of the Republic of Namibia to constantly communicate her position on domestic, regional and international issues."

Steps to promote interaction with citizens, civil society and the media are commendable and should help to create a dialogue with the public out of which policy makers can make better informed foreign policy decisions.

Many of the longstanding themes of Namibian foreign policy remain in place such as pan-African solidarity and non-alignment. What does appear to be different is the narrative of broader friendship and inclusivity expressed by President Geingob. This approach is visible in the holding of a wide-ranging foreign policy review conference in July 2016.

Conclusions

Most small states face a common problem - defining an appropriate relationship between capability and policy. Given that there might be limited machinery for conducting external relations, it is even more important that Namibia's foreign policy is clear, principled and focused. There will be times we need to take sides and we need a foreign policy based on our Constitution that guides responses and interventions.

A starting point for defining foreign policy should be Namibia's Constitution, particularly the values expressed in the Bill of Rights. The Namibian Constitution promotes human rights, access to justice, poverty alleviation and economic development. Through bodies like the UN Human Rights Council and other international organisations and fora, Namibia should take a more pro-active role in promoting these ideals at a global level. Namibia benefitted from the cooperation of the international community in the brokerage of its independence and should promote and support similar programmes in areas of conflict mediation.

Namibia is a small country with limited resources and cannot be everywhere at all times. Therefore, aligning our presence abroad to our foreign policy goals is crucial. The establishment of embassies and high commissions should be subject to cost-benefit analyses. Aside from the running costs, it is very expensive to buy properties overseas for embassies and ambassadorial residences (in part due to the exchange rate). The strengths and weaknesses of each foreign mission's performance should be assessed on a regular basis to ensure these high costs are worth it.

Since Namibia's foreign policy is being reviewed and public engagement and inputs have been encouraged it is important that a foreign policy discussion paper is produced before a formal policy is adopted. This will enable these important discussions to be taken beyond the confines of a conference hall in Windhoek. This discussion paper could be in the form of a Green Paper before a formal White Paper is agreed and adopted.

Under the Geingob Presidency there is a drive to form a more productive relationship with the Namibian public.

In order to update and aid focus in foreign policy Namibia should re-assess what it means to be non-aligned in the post Cold War world, as well as what modern Pan-Africanism means in practice. For example, Pan-Africanism cannot mean ignoring human rights abuses in nearby countries in the interests of African solidarity or the need for a quiet diplomatic life. Foreign policy cannot primarily be based on relations that existed in 1990 and before.

With the inauguration of President Geingob there is a sense that various aspects of government policy are being overhauled and revitalised. President Geingob has committed himself to a domestic agenda focussed on tackling poverty, improving service delivery and ending corruption. Some steps such as the declaration of assets by the President and the First Lady have been presented as good examples for Africa and the international community. Such commitments could be given a higher profile to advocate for greater transparency.

Namibia's foreign policy is not about slogans - however nice they might sound. It is about practical action - how we use public diplomacy to entrench our values and promote them abroad. Although some might think that Namibia has little need of a foreign policy due its size - in fact there are many issues that on Namibia's agenda - whether we choose to address them or not.

While an updated White Paper is needed, the new approach of inclusivity could be used to first generate a Green Paper - a working document to encourage national discourse about modern Namibian values and how they should be reflected and projected in our foreign policy.

To come back to one of the opening quotes of this paper - "Soft power is determined not only by economic strength, but also by the ability of states to produce knowledge and influence thinking." (Jakkie Cilliers, ISS). Namibia may not be the most powerful nation in terms of its economy or its military but we can strong in the way we produce knowledge and influence thinking. This could be our greatest contribution to international progress in the 21st century.

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