

**“Hasten the Inevitable Day of Freedom”:** The Carter  
Administration and Namibian Independence, 1977-1981

By

Clara J. Holloway

Thesis

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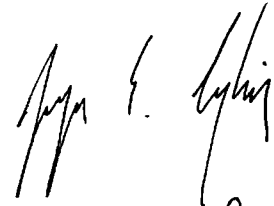
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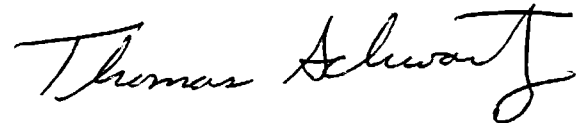
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## THE STORY: PAST PLAYWRIGHTS AND NEW THEME:

An unbroken will expressed itself in faint etchings on a stony prison cell wall in southern Africa. “Namibia Will Be Free” and “One Namibia, One Nation” slowly appeared and grew bolder on the gray stone as John Ya-Otto would “scratch for a few seconds, then stop and listen for footsteps in the corridor” in order to avoid detection by his captors.<sup>1</sup> Those short phrases manifested Ya-Otto’s determination and conviction to see South Africa relinquish its control over Namibia, Ya-Otto’s homeland. The words themselves revived Ya-Otto even though he was physically battered, removed from his wife and child, and confined away from all human contacts other than his tormentors. In his words, the wall etchings “made me feel strong; I became so inspired that I did a little dance when I looked at that wall.”<sup>2</sup> The dream for Namibian independence led to Ya-Otto’s imprisonment, yet that dream was the one ideal to which he clung as he suffered unimaginable cruelty for its sake. Ya-Otto’s story, told in his autobiography, Battlefront Namibia, personalizes the struggle of a million and a half Namibians for an independent and apartheid-free Namibia.

Ya-Otto’s serious troubles with South African authorities came when he and thirty-six others were arrested and began their wait for trial on charges associated with membership in an independence movement. For seven months before the trial, the “special branch” of the South African police detained him. During that time, he underwent severe torture and nerve-shattering isolation. One night, special agents forced him to hold a broom over his head as he ran, naked, in circles around a table. The gang of agents whipped and hit him as he ran. They berated him with comments as he repeatedly collapsed, out of breath and bleeding. After suffering for a while, Ya-Otto smashed the jaw of one agent with the broomstick. Despite the fact that it brought

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<sup>1</sup> John Ya-Otto, Battlefront Namibia, Lawrence Hill and Company, Westport, CT, 1981, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

repercussions in the form of being tied up, hung from a water pipe, and repeatedly electrocuted in numerous places on his body. Ya-Otto felt that he “had won this round.”<sup>3</sup> He, like countless other Namibians, believed in the power of relentless resistance to defeat South Africa.

The story of the Namibian independence struggle began shortly after World War I. The League of Nations entrusted a relatively large, mineral-rich, sparsely populated, and arid former German colony named South-west Africa to the white-dominated nation of South Africa on terms subject to varying interpretations.<sup>4</sup> After the second World War, the International Court of Justice gave the United Nations’ General Assembly power to oversee the trusteeship, and the General Assembly took full advantage of such authority. It passed several resolutions in the 1950s and 1960s calling for South-west Africa’s trusteeship to be handed over to the United Nations. South Africa, for political, security, economic, and racial reasons, rejected all these resolutions. African states were dismayed by South Africa’s reluctance to cooperate with the international body and looked for ways legally to coerce the nation to grant South-west Africa its independence. They were successful in 1966 and 1969, when the General Assembly and Security Council, in that order, terminated South Africa’s mandate over South-west Africa (hereafter solely referred to as Namibia). This came about as a result of South Africa’s attempts to increase its control over Namibia, which violated the International Court of Justice’s ruling that the United Nations must pre-approve changes that would affect Namibia’s standing in international affairs.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion on the history of South Africa’s control over Namibia see Christopher Coker’s book, Christopher Coker, *The United States and South Africa, 1961-1985: Constructive Engagement and Its Critics*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1986, pp. 242-246.

During South Africa's rule of Namibia, black Namibians lived under the oppressive rule of the minority of whites.<sup>5</sup> An apartheid system like that of South Africa dictated the lives of blacks and other minorities in Namibia. Until the late 1950s, Namibians largely accepted this way of life and coped with it as best they could. Only the most fortunate blacks could attain any upper level education, like high school, but even then they received far inferior instruction than their white counterparts. Also, instructors often permeated classroom lectures and discussion with racist rhetoric. Tribal factions facilitated whites' attempts to "divide and conquer" the black population in Namibia. Intra-racial disputes played a greater role in the lives of black Namibians than inter-racial disputes for generations because of blacks' supposed helplessness in the face of the entrenched apartheid system. Until a grass-roots black consciousness movement appeared and united black Namibians, tribal leaders influenced black opinion. Those leaders sometimes were pliable instruments of minority rule or else tried to calm blacks' anger toward whites in order to maintain peace. The situation of black Namibians clearly needed rectification. A black consciousness movement, which tried to better the situation of black Namibians, bloomed in the 1950s despite attempts by authorities to curb it. That movement grew large enough eventually to capture the attention of American policy-makers.

From the 1960s until 1976, the question of Namibia remained in flux. American presidential administrations frequently ignored the issue or used it for domestic and international gain by chanting empty rhetoric to increase domestic, liberal support and to quiet Third World criticism.<sup>6</sup> The importance of maintaining good relations with the anti-communist, economically strong, white, and mineral-rich South Africa outweighed any concern over Namibian

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<sup>5</sup> To better understand Namibia's struggle for independence on a personal level, John Ya-Otto's autobiography is an excellent source.

<sup>6</sup> Liberal, in this case, is defined as relating to someone who advocates reform, especially in the area of civil rights.

independence. Not until Jimmy Carter entered the White House and brought with him an administration focused on human rights, majority rule, and moral imperatives did the United States truly advance the stalemated Namibian independence process. This thesis argues that Carter's policies toward South Africa were novel, prefigured a post-Cold War mentality, and proved effective in hastening Namibian independence.<sup>7</sup> Carter's post-Cold War mentality incorporated a unique, human rights-centered, and regionalist view combined with a willingness to work within multilateral organizations in order to formulate foreign policy. That foreign policy remained focused on human rights and regionalism throughout Carter's administration, even though both domestic and global politics affected it.<sup>8</sup>

Carter's policies regarding Namibia were both unique and successful in relation to his predecessors', but Carter was not heedless of traditional foreign policy concerns. Where his forerunners had linked African problems to the Cold War and containment of communism on the African continent, Carter and his administration saw southern Africa in a regionalist light. Carter was able to depart from a Cold War ideology because of his belief in the validity of human rights and majority rule as foreign policy objectives for the United States. In fact, "Carter advocated majority rule and was the first American president publicly to denounce apartheid."<sup>9</sup> He tempered his idealism with realism, however. Douglas Brinkley says of him, "Carter was realistic enough to recognize that human rights policy could not achieve unadulterated purity, nor could it be based on a blind adherence to consistency." But at the same time [Carter] felt that

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<sup>7</sup> For an example of an author's use of the term "post-Cold War" in describing Carter's foreign policy, see Douglas Brinkley, "The Rising Stock of Jimmy Carter: The "Hands on" Legacy of Our Thirty-ninth President," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 20, No. 4, Fall 1996, pp. 505-529.

<sup>8</sup> Regionalism is defined as the foreign policy concept that issues should be understood in the context of the specific region where they occur and relating to concurrent and proximal issues in that region. Globalism is the opposing ideology in which issues are understood as they relate to world events and a country's position in global politics.

<sup>9</sup> Brinkley, p. 519.

the United States should everywhere denounce, with varying degrees of vehemence, authoritarianism--government-sanctioned murders, kidnappings, and torture."<sup>10</sup> Carter himself said that "This does not mean that we can conduct our foreign policy by rigid moral maxims."<sup>11</sup> And although the Cold War was not Carter's main concern in southern Africa (he said that human rights was his administration's central concern<sup>12</sup>), he did realize the benefit of principled action in the area to undermine Soviet influence on black Africans.<sup>13</sup> Criticisms of Carter as naive and soft on America's enemies lack full understanding of his goals and guidelines.

Namibia proves a fertile area of research and illustrates many aspects of Carter's unique foreign policy. On the issue of Namibian independence, Carter maintained a consistent stance, which genuinely reflected the goals and beliefs he held at the time he entered the White House. His voting base, deeply-held religious views, and personal ideals facilitated his shift away from realpolitik and toward the post-Cold War. Arguably, the Carter administration did devote less time to pursuing Namibian independence toward the end of its tenure when the Iran hostage situation and other crises demanded the majority of the president's and his staff's time and energy. However, Carter never let up completely and never changed his stance. No one in the international community could question the Carter administration's commitment to full Namibian independence, regardless of the Cold War proxy wars being fought in the region. The regionalist, human rights-oriented view that helped win Carter the support of many traditional Democrats prevailed in matters of Namibian independence.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 521.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 521.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 523.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 521.

Historical work on Carter's policies toward South Africa vis-à-vis Namibia are still quite scarce. Regrettably, most works on Carter's policies concerning southern Africa focus on Angola or Zimbabwe. However, a few secondary sources do devote some coverage to the issue of Namibian independence. Within these few monographs, criticism of Carter abounds. A general consensus exists that admonishes Carter for half-hearted policies or lost initiative toward inducing change in southern Africa, especially after his first year or two in office.

Gaddis Smith, a Yale historian and author of Morality, Reason, and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years (1986), devotes a mere two pages of his two-hundred-forty-seven page book to Namibia despite saying, "In no part of the world was the interplay of morality, reason, and power more continuous or fascinating [than in Africa]."<sup>14</sup> Smith argues that Carter's policies in Africa had mixed success. Too often, Smith argues, Carter's original beliefs and motives were altered by political realities, such as the Cold War and the oil crisis. Smith's treatment of Namibia does little other than recount the history of Namibia's control by South Africa. He indicates that Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young persevered in attempts to further the Namibian independence movement but those efforts led nowhere due to South African hedging and an overall lack of conviction among Carter and his administrators.

In his otherwise comprehensive book on modern United States' relations with Africa, United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change (1994), Peter Schraeder barely touches on the subject of Namibia. He does devote a chapter to American relations with South Africa, and, within that chapter, a discussion on the Carter administration's dealings with the apartheid regime outlines Schraeder's critical analysis of that administration. Schraeder's conclusions are in line with the consensus of many historians of the Carter

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<sup>14</sup> Gaddis Smith, Morality, Reason, and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years, Hill and Wang, New York, 1986, p. 133.



administration's foreign policy. Mainly, Schraeder believes that Carter's actions did not correspond to his rhetoric and that even the rhetoric against minority rule and globalism died down after 1978. He credits such a lack of perseverance to pressure from globalist Cold Warriors, who led a "resurgence of Cold War thinking within the policy-making establishment in 1978 and beyond."<sup>15</sup>

In discussing the Carter administration's dealings with South Africa, Christopher Coker, in his book, The United States and South Africa, 1968-1985: Constructive Engagement and Its Critics (1986), asks "why Carter's policy failed so completely."<sup>16</sup> This less than laudatory assessment indicates Coker's overall view of the Carter administration's achievements in southern Africa. Coker does acknowledge that Carter tempered his idealistic rhetoric with pragmatic analyses but claims that Carter's enthusiasm for human rights and majority rule closed his eyes to pivotal issues, such as a reactionary South African populace. In contrast to Schraeder, Coker argues that Carter pushed South Africa too hard at times to produce change. The argument that Carter fell into a Cold War perspective in the later stages of his administration resurfaces in Coker's book. Coker's analysis is more nuanced and plausible, though. He claims that Zbigniew Brzezinski and other conservative elements in Carter's administration feared growing Soviet influence in southern Africa and that this fear led to an assumed need to gain favor among black Africans in Zimbabwe and Namibia. This conclusion is much more valid than the assumption that a swing to the right after 1978 sent the Carter administration into the arms of the anti-communist South African regime.

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<sup>15</sup> Peter J. Schraeder, United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 219.

<sup>16</sup> Coker, p. 139.

One chapter of Coker's book elaborates on the Namibia issue, although only a few pages relate Carter's dealings with the issue. Again, the author does not credit Carter with his administration's accomplishments concerning Namibia, but he outlines the efforts of the United States within multilateral organizations during Carter's presidency. Most notably, Coker establishes two important achievements made by the time President Reagan entered office. One, South Africa had agreed to let internationally supervised elections for a constitutional assembly occur instead of setting up a puppet interim government to oversee the transition to a supposed majority rule. Two, South Africa had agreed to allow the UN to supervise the elections.

Almost all texts dealing with Carter and his African policies note the novelty of his policies and ideology, especially in the wake of Kissinger and Nixon, who cared little about "soft" issues, such as racial equality, and who subscribed to the schools of globalism and the Cold War. This thesis concurs with views of those such as Richard E. Bissell, who, in his book, South Africa and the United States: The Erosion of an Influence Relationship (1982), states that "the heart of the Carter administration was profoundly anti-South African."<sup>17</sup> Bissell points out that the white South Africans noted Carter's departure from Cold War ideology and watched it with dismay.<sup>18</sup> Carter's public image was firmly entrenched in the idealism of majority rule and regionalism, and that spelled change for United States policies toward southern Africa. This thesis analyzes some of the reasons behind Carter's views and contrasts them to the ideology of the Nixon/Kissinger era in order to establish a framework for understanding and evaluating Carter's achievements in building a foundation for the transition to Namibian independence.

Another aspect of this thesis incorporates analysis of the many facets of the Carter administration itself and how those facets intermingled in forming policy concerning Namibia.

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<sup>17</sup> Richard E. Bissell, South Africa and the United States: The Erosion of an Influence Relationship, Praeger, New York, 1982, p. 32.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Douglas Brinkley and R. Benneson DeJanes have written intriguing pieces on the sometimes conflicting personalities of Carter's closest advisors. Even though excellent articles and chapters of books have already dealt with this issue, it is relevant enough to a study of Carter's Namibian policy to warrant another look. Also, this thesis argues that, at least in the case of Namibia, the side that cared the most about the issue won the ear of the president and was therefore able to influence policy.

The secondary literature on Carter's foreign policy toward South Africa lacks a comprehensive analysis of his administration's push for Namibian independence. This thesis fills that void and uses such an analysis to illustrate the post-Cold War nature of Carter's foreign policy and its variance from previous presidents' foreign policies. In doing so, this thesis rebuts many of the afore-mentioned authors' claims. Also, this thesis serves to add more arguments to the brief debate on the Carter administration's activities concerning Namibian independence.

Authors writing about Carter's foreign policy often ignore his use of multilateral organizations to achieve his objectives. In fact, Carter's appointees heavily relied on multilateral organizations. Those organizations were able to build a measure of trust, previously non-existent, among the parties concerned with Namibian independence. That trust led to historic meetings among parties that previously had refused to acknowledge each other. Multilateral organizations also gave the United States more leverage and room to maneuver. Carter's administration amassed support from other countries to help it persuade concerned parties that following the United States' directives would be beneficial and not following those directives would be costly. Working within multilateral organizations also indicated a shift away from Kissingerian diplomacy. Multilateral cooperation showed a foreign policy more open to observation and criticism. The American public as well as foreign countries could witness just how sincere Carter's rhetoric was by noting the extent to which his actions backed up his words. Back room, one-on-one diplomacy, such as that employed by Kissinger vis-à-vis South African

officials, could not exist in multilateral organizations. The United States no longer reassured South Africa that private support would belie public criticism. Most authors overlook this important shift that Carter's administration undertook.

The secondary literature also misinterprets or bypasses Carter's consistency in working toward a settlement for Namibian independence. Most authors assert that the Carter administration fell short of living up to its rhetoric about Namibian independence. Authors either feel that the Carter administration never took a strong stance for Namibian independence or that the administration became more focused on the Cold War after 1978 and sacrificed Namibian independence to realpolitik. Both arguments are false in the case of Namibia, even though they may be valid regarding some areas of Africa. Carter's and his administration's stance toward Namibian independence did not falter. It is true that Carter did not relentlessly pursue every avenue of punitive measures against South Africa. Many would argue that had he done so, Carter would have caused a stalwart reaction among white South Africans and not been able to make much headway at all. The message from Washington rang loud and clear throughout Carter's tenure while he nimbly balanced pressure and encouragement: Namibian independence was a mandatory precursor for positive, normal relations between South Africa and the United States. When the message quieted down after 1978, it was due to competing foreign policy concerns, not a change of heart. Carter did not end up viewing Namibia through the lens of the Cold War, even if his perspective changed on other areas of Africa and the Third World.

By January 1981, when President Reagan took office, Namibian independence was on its way to fruition. President Carter and his administration had furthered the Namibian independence process more than many foreign policy officials had believed possible. South Africa had recognized and met face to face with the strongest Namibian independence organization. Both of those parties at various times had agreed to United Nations resolutions on Namibian independence. And South Africa had learned that the United States no longer would

contrive to maintain the status quo in southern Africa, regardless of Cold War concerns. Carter had moved the independence process to a point of no return. Subsequent shifts to conservatism and realpolitik could not undo the progress made by Carter. This thesis outlines that progress in a framework designed to illustrate its significance.

Much of this thesis relies on primary research because few historians have looked at the issues raised by the Namibian independence movement, and scarcely any historians have even touched upon Carter's policies toward that movement. An examination of Carter's views toward Namibia, his administrators' interpretation of those views, and the resultant policies and actions toward South Africa concerning Namibia offer a chance to glimpse an exceptional footnote in United States and world history. The case of Namibia is one in which Carter was able to carry out his personal convictions and lead the United States in maintaining a regionalist, human rights-oriented objective during the Cold War. Most administrators did not consider Namibia to be as important to national security interests as Iran, for instance. Therefore, Carter's administration could conduct a novel experiment there and witness the effects of such a post-Cold War policy. There is always danger in generalizing foreign policy results; no two situations are ever the same. However, if Carter's relative success in Namibia can shed light on similar situations, by all means historians and politicians should consider that overlooked moment on America's historic timeline.

## **KISSINGER AS DIRECTOR:**

In order to more fully understand the significance of Carter's policies on Namibian independence, this thesis will briefly examine his immediate predecessors' policies as representative of previous administrations' objectives in southern Africa. The foreign policies of administrations before Carter's toward the Third World in general and toward South Africa in particular had been shaped by national security concerns within the context of the Cold War. Although a few American leaders, such as President John Kennedy, claimed to want to take a more ideologically-based stance concerned with human rights in southern Africa, no administration had devoted significant time or energy to promoting real change for southern African blacks. The rhetoric employed by such leaders was primarily a tool for maintaining liberal and black support within the United States. The words did not reflect a change in policies, which tacitly supported the white South African government and which South Africans saw as quiet sympathy for their plight in international affairs. Following Kennedy's death, President Lyndon Johnson relegated African issues to the back burner of foreign relations even though he strongly supported the domestic civil rights movement. Lack of concern with the continent was common except in periods of Cold War crisis, such as proxy wars between the Soviets and Cubans, and the Americans. During the presidencies of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger formulated and carried out such policies. This thesis uses Kissinger as representative of official United States' attitudes toward the white South

African government until the presidency of Jimmy Carter. Kissinger used realpolitik to extend both Kennedy's and Johnson's attitudes into the 1970s.<sup>1</sup>

Kissinger formulated foreign policy from a globalist perspective. He tied African issues into the Cold War and did not seek "African solutions to African problems" the way a regionalist would do. As the continent of Africa cast off many of its vestiges of colonialism in the 1950s and 1960s, quasi-Marxist and communist groups gained political footholds in newly-independent countries. Kissinger viewed this as a threatening development and one that would alter the power balance between the United States and the Soviet Union. South Africa remained one of very few staunchly anti-communist countries in Africa, and Kissinger believed he needed to maintain good relations with and support for the South African government in order to strengthen the western position in Africa.

In April, 1969, Kissinger ordered a study, National Security Study Memorandum 39, which, among other things, would examine the direction of foreign relations with South Africa.. The fact that Kissinger ordered this document illustrates that the Nixon administration knew it could not wholly support South Africa because of apartheid but that Kissinger wanted to work around that issue instead of taking a moralist stand against institutionalized racism in another country. The study outlined six options for the United States.<sup>2</sup> The second option, which became known as "constructive engagement." was

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<sup>1</sup> Kissinger's realpolitik is defined as the use of foreign policy to further national security interests, such as military strength, economic power or Cold War influence, often sacrificing issues like racial equality.

<sup>2</sup> The options presented a spectrum of policies. Option one proposing the most Cold War-based policies, and option six being the most liberal. Note that option two falls as the second most realpolitik-centered option.

premised on the belief that “The whites are here to stay and the only way that constructive change can come about is through them.”<sup>3</sup> Change was to be achieved by an attempt to “maintain public opposition to racial repression but relax political isolation and economic restrictions on the white states.”<sup>4</sup> The United States was then willing to accept minor concessions from the South African government as long as those concessions “assure[d] broadened political participation in some form by the whole population.”<sup>5</sup> Such vague requests as were spelled out in NSSM 39 were unlikely to precipitate real adjustments in South African policy, and it is likely that that suited Kissinger fine. Constructive engagement was designed to minimize liberal antagonism at home while fostering economic and security interests abroad. Moral imperatives did not fit easily into the equation Kissinger calculated.

Concern over racial tensions did exist during the Nixon and Ford administrations. However, that concern reflected a fear of instability should black African states and black populations within white-dominated states decide not to cooperate with western goals. One of the advantages seen in constructive engagement was the easing of South Africa’s siege mentality as a way of “extend[ing] South African relationships with black Africa.”<sup>6</sup> From the context of the study, it is clear that the extended relationships would have been

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Mokoena, ed., South Africa and the United States: The Declassified History, The New Press, New York, 1993, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 212.



directed at furthering western influence in black Africa and decreasing violence that erupted as a reaction to white repression of black minorities.

The use of unilateral measures in dealing with South Africa during Kissinger's tenure as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State outweighed the use of multilateral directives, such as those issued by the United Nations.<sup>7</sup> Kissinger and his superiors preferred to act independently of international organizations. This phenomenon may have had several causes. It helped establish a supportive and understanding tone between the two countries. Kissinger met separately with South African government officials Pik Botha, the South African ambassador, and Prime Minister Vorster during 1976 to discuss problems in southern Africa. Public announcements after these meetings indicated that the United States was urging greater coexistence between the whites and blacks in the region but that further talks were needed.<sup>8</sup> Privately, Kissinger was working hard to accommodate the South Africans and improve their position in international affairs. In one instance, Vorster's objections to a proposed plan for Rhodesian majority rule caused Kissinger to alter the plan and try to establish a white majority on the interim government's Council of State.<sup>9</sup> By allowing South Africa to influence American behavior, Kissinger strengthened the private and personal ties to the white regime despite occasional public assurances of intentions to bring black majority rule to southern Africa.

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<sup>7</sup> Kissinger's attention did not focus on southern Africa much at all until late 1974, when a coup toppled the Portuguese government and ended Portuguese control over its colonies in Africa opening the way for communist expansion in those colonies.

<sup>8</sup> National Security Archives Microfiche Collection, "South Africa and the United States: the Making of Foreign Policy, 1962-1989," index, chronology, 5/14/76, p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> NSA collection chronology, 9/15/76, p. 54.

South Africans were given the impression that the United States tacitly sympathized with and supported their policies but had to be covert in doing so. The South African government was able to ignore the public rhetoric because it was belied by the private actions. In fact, Vorster publicly interpreted Kissinger's stance as favorable to South African whites.<sup>10</sup> Unilateral measures allowed for this in ways that multilateral measures could not. Activities within the United Nations were open for scrutiny by the international community and influenced by countries that were hostile to South Africa and/or antagonistic toward American national security interests.

Kissinger acted on African issues late in his career and superficially. His understanding of African issues remained limited by his globalist objectives. Even though he devoted greater attention to southern African issues in 1975-1976, African states and SWAPO, the Namibian independence movement called South-West Africa People's Organization, remained rightfully critical of his policies and motives. Toward the end of his tenure, he made a shuttle trip through Africa to demonstrate the United States' commitment to African issues. "[S]elf-determination, majority rule, equal rights and human dignity for all the peoples of southern Africa--in the name of moral principle, international law and world peace" received Americans' support, according to Kissinger in a speech made in front of President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia.<sup>11</sup> Appeals to these principles formed a new type of rhetoric for the Secretary of State. He understood that black Africans wanted a regionalist solution that would advance majority rule and human

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<sup>10</sup> NSA collection chronology. 8/13/76. p. 53.

<sup>11</sup> Speech. Henry Kissinger to President Kenneth Kaunda, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #577.

rights in Namibia and elsewhere in southern Africa. He hoped to use tantalizing rhetoric to accrue black African support for the United States. This, in turn, would presumably halt the tide of growing communist influence in Africa.

Kissinger did not satisfy black Africa's desire for a sincere commitment to bring change to Africa and a deep comprehension of African views from the United States. He offered neither. A State Department telegram to the United States embassy in Pretoria displayed his lack of true sympathy for black Africans. Kissinger wrote, "It is important to keep the African position in perspective as you assess the importance of the Resolution [for a mandatory arms embargo] and not overrate its significance. The Africans are victims of their rhetorical posture in this matter."<sup>12</sup> He also did not realize the progress that could be made on the Namibian issue. In a State Department telegram after an October 1976 meeting with United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, Kissinger claimed that "it was unrealistic to demand that South Africa attend purely trilateral UN-SWAPO-South Africa conference[s]."<sup>13</sup> Later events under the Carter administration proved Kissinger wrong. Kissinger "stressed that once the conference [between the United Nations and South Africa] convenes, Namibian independence is virtually inevitable."<sup>27</sup> His lack of confidence in anyone's ability to bring SWAPO and South Africa together made him short-sighted and led him to the false conclusion that the Namibian problem could be solved without working with SWAPO. If South Africa would not recognize SWAPO at negotiations, how would the United Nations convince

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<sup>12</sup> Department of State telegram, Henry Kissinger to US Embassy in Pretoria, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #672.

<sup>13</sup> Department of State telegram. US Mission USUN to Henry Kissinger. NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #665.

that country to allow elections in which SWAPO was likely to win authority in Namibia?  
Or was that Kissinger's aim?

Many American officials, South Africans and other members of the international community accused SWAPO of having communist connections. Based on Kissinger's career as a formidable proponent of containment and Cold War hawkishness, it is likely that he never meant for Resolution 385 to be implemented in its intended state for fear that SWAPO would then control Namibia. He may have wished to use it as a decorative example of United States commitment to Namibian independence, hoping to ward off black African criticism by claiming to have taken significant steps to bring majority rule to Namibia. This would have ensured an anti-communist stronghold in Namibia by assuring that real control of the country would remain in the hands of South Africa.

Cold War ideology dominated Kissinger's policies on southern Africa. His sharp turn in rhetoric during late 1974-1976 indicated nothing more than a variance in tactics with which to approach the Cold War in the Third World. Such tactics, being insincere and compromised by a lack of conviction, could not change Namibia's plight. A current of silent support for South Africa underlied Kissinger's ideology. He recognized the need for black African support for the United States, but his head and heart seemed to lean toward white South Africa. Despite his invocations of racial justice, his main concerns remained containment and other national security interests. After Kissinger's reign as a dominant force in American foreign policy, Carter and his administration ushered in a wave of revolution comprised of human rights, majority rule, and regionalism.

## CARTER'S CAST, THEIR AUDIENCE AND THEIR INTERACTION:

Carter's domestic political support stemmed mainly from traditional Democratic groups that included blacks, women, and liberal voting blocs. These groups were proponents of human rights and majority rule in southern Africa and, thus, supported Carter in his objectives in southern Africa. Had past presidents wanted to follow policies similar to Carter's, they would have faced strong opposition by a more conservative electorate.

Blacks, Jews, and labor unions all claimed credit for propelling Carter into the White House in 1976.<sup>1</sup> He carried these voting blocs despite campaigning snafus that nearly cost him their support. In an interview for *The New York Daily News*, Carter answered a question about placing low-income blacks in traditionally white suburbs. His answer angered many in the black community. He stated that "to artificially inject another racial group into a community" was unnecessary.<sup>2</sup> He saw "nothing wrong with ethnic purity being maintained."<sup>3</sup> Carter apologized for his remarks and explained that the statement was a slip of the tongue. He used his past record with civil rights initiatives to help correct the misperception of him as racist. The apology helped, but the Reverend Martin Luther King Sr.'s public forgiveness of Carter helped settle the civil rights communities' qualms with the candidate. Dr. Ethel Allen, a black surgeon and Ford supporter, cynically claimed that the "'ethnic purity' statement was a 'brilliant' political move."<sup>4</sup> He felt that the Southern white supremacist vote belonged to Carter because he uttered the statement in the first place and that the blacks would back Carter as well. To quote Allen, Carter "didn't lose points with blacks because blacks can forgive a man who's religious sooner than

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<sup>1</sup> Victor Lasky, *Jimmy Carter: The Man and the Myth*, Richard Marek Publishers, New York, 1979, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

they can forgive a man who's not close to God."<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the validity of Allen's analysis, Carter did carry over 90% of the black vote in November 1976.

American dissatisfaction with current events bolstered Carter's drive for the presidency. Watergate and Vietnam had contributed to a mistrust of government. 1975 saw Ford's pardoning of Nixon and the fall of Saigon.<sup>6</sup> Americans felt disillusioned, dissatisfied, and uneasy about Washington. Carter presented himself as an outsider to Washington politics, and his party had not had to grapple with the fallout of a major scandal as had the Republicans. Thus, he appealed to Americans who voted against the status quo more than for any particular policy.

Carter reassured Americans of their moral righteousness. He was going to bring a new dawn of American politics, one that included virtue and honor. The public responded to a candidate who could make them feel good about themselves again. Carter said, "We've lost the spirit of our nation. We've seen a loss of morality.. and we're ashamed of what our government is as we deal with other nations around the world, and that's got to be changed. and I'm going to change it...What we seek is...a foreign policy that reflects the decency and generosity and common sense of our own people."<sup>7</sup> His optimism, solace, and reinforcement appealed to Americans at such a dark time in their history. Carter knew this and used it to its fullest extent. He fully believed he was capable of revamping American foreign and domestic politics. However, his victory by only a small margin in November meant that he needed to satisfy domestic voters in order to even hope for re-election or maintain control over foreign policy.

Carter began his foreign policy with initiatives signaling change, but he also needed to maintain domestic support. Carter often relied on his own moral imperatives, which satisfied his

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

strongest supporters. However, he soon fell into disfavor with conservatives, many of whom had backed him in 1976. This and the tensions within his administration led to difficulty in his pursuing a cohesive foreign policy strategy. However, this did not have much impact on the issue of Namibian independence. The civil rights organizations in the United States composed the only large voting bloc deeply concerned with Namibia. The regionalists in his administration also concerned themselves with Namibian independence while the globalists worried much more about the Middle East, the Soviet Union, and China. Thus, Carter's policies on Namibia largely reflected his values, which resembled and reflected the civil rights community's.

Along with his trouble retaining voter support, Carter's problems as an administrator led to numerous difficulties in forming a coherent and unified direction in which to take foreign policy toward South Africa. He often was unable to resolve the conflicting viewpoints of his appointed administrators. Congress had become more liberal, and its members, especially the Congressional Black Caucus, felt that more severe actions needed to be taken against South Africa. The National Security Council, headed by Zbigniew Brzezinski, reflected a more traditional and hard-line approach to foreign policy. The NSC viewed the problems in southern Africa either as a part of the Cold War and the fight to deter the spread of communism or as of lesser importance to the pragmatic interests of the United States. The State Department and the Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, favored a regionalist approach to South Africa and advocated support for human rights and political equality for all races in southern Africa. The United States' ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young, was the strongest liberal in Carter Administration. In the end, it appears that those most interested in African affairs held the most sway over policy concerning Namibia. Because the problems with South Africa and Namibia revolved around racial issues, it can be argued that liberals concerned themselves with bringing change to those countries more so than did conservatives.

The most outspoken criticism from Congress of Carter's handling of the Namibia question came from the Congressional Black Caucus. Congressman Charles Diggs, Jr. chaired the caucus's International Relations Subcommittee and advocated a stronger anti-South African stance from the administration. Highly skeptical of the United States' support of internal settlements for South Africa and the administration's condoning of American companies' use of Constructive Engagement in order to bring change to South Africa, the caucus proposed twelve points in 1978 for the Administration to implement into the policies toward South Africa. In a follow-up letter, the caucus claimed that the "current Administration policy toward South Africa is, in fact, one of verbal condemnation of Apartheid without a decisive program of action"<sup>8</sup> and that "the U.S. should follow the progressive lead of Canada"<sup>9</sup> in terms of minimizing economic relations with South Africa. Ironically enough, the Canadians and the other members of the United Nations Security Council viewed the United States as the leader in urging South Africa to reform its policies in Namibia and as the country willing to go the furthest in pushing South African officials for change.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the Carter Administration came under attack from many in government and the general public for too aggressively challenging the South African Government.

The contradictory opinions can be understood better by acknowledging the great importance of civil rights for minorities to the Congressional Black Caucus. The caucus's great concern over the issue of majority rule and human rights in Namibia led it to establish higher demands on and expectations for the Carter administration. When the administration, for reasons

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<sup>8</sup> Letter, Charles Diggs to Zbigniew Brzezinski, April 13, 1978, White House Central File, Box CO-53, Countries file-141 (South Africa), Jimmy Carter Library.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Department of State telegram, US Mission USUN to Cyrus Vance, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #790.



of practicality and moderation, did not live up to those standards. it came under attack from the caucus and like-minded organizations.

Andrew Young also harshly criticized past efforts aimed at encouraging change in South African policies toward Namibia. Young, an African-American with a long career in the civil rights movement, brought new vigor to the debate on Namibia in the United Nations. He often gave vent to his anger and frustration over South African stalemating in negotiations and South Africans' slow response to international pressure to grant independence to Namibia. Many in and around the Carter Administration condemned Young's morality-driven actions. Young de-emphasized the possibility that South Africa was capable of developing a siege mentality that would preclude the United States from making any progress on the question of Namibia, while others hoped to maintain a reasonable relationship between South Africa and the United States in order to facilitate negotiations and effect change.<sup>11</sup> If the United States had lost all credibility with South Africa, the South African government may have dismissed attempts to negotiate believing that they would not receive a fair deal in talks implemented by a country completely antagonistic toward it.

The common link between the Congressional Black Caucus and Andrew Young was their ties to the domestic civil rights community. Organizations, such as the NAACP and its Task Force on Africa, actively promoted United States support for regionalist and human rights-based policies in southern Africa.<sup>12</sup> The Congressional Black Caucus shared those concerns. African-American voters considered the events in South Africa very salient to and symbolic of the civil rights movement in the United States. Andrew Young had been a Congressman from Georgia before being appointed United States ambassador to the United Nations and had ample

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<sup>11</sup> Johannesburg Press on USA Africa Policy, US Embassy Pretoria to State Department, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #735.

<sup>12</sup> Letter, Dr. W. Montague Cobb to Walter Mondale, June 16, 1977, White House Central Files, Box CO-53, Countries file-141 (South Africa), Jimmy Carter Library.

connections to the civil rights community. One of his former constituents, Dr. Horace E. Tate, became involved in the fight for change in South Africa and Namibian independence. Tate, the Associate Executive Secretary of the Georgia Association of Educators, wrote a letter to Carter summarizing his impressions from a trip to South Africa in the summer of 1976.<sup>13</sup> His dubious statistics and strident tone decrease his credibility, but his letter is indicative of the concern with which African-Americans viewed the issue of Namibian independence. This is not to say that administrators were motivated solely by domestic politics. Deep moral conviction that racial inequality and institutionalized human rights violations must be eradicated also drove Young and many others. However, the role of civil rights leaders in the United States in shaping policy toward South Africa concerning Namibia cannot be ignored.

Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Donald McHenry, the deputy envoy to the United Nations and later the ambassador to the United Nations, worked diligently toward Namibian independence and were successful in bringing South Africa and SWAPO to the negotiating table. Although anxious to reform South Africa's policies on Namibia, these men did not act on this issue without contemplating the impact on South Africa and its willingness to cooperate with the United Nations and the United States. However, these men maintained consistent pressure on South Africa. In no uncertain terms did they indicate the unacceptability of an internal settlement to the Namibia question or a resolution short of full citizenship including equal political participation for every Namibian. The secretary felt that "the effort was itself the message."<sup>14</sup> Vance also tried to "seek progress on the Namibian and Rhodesian questions while simultaneously pressing the South African government to concede some ground on apartheid."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Letter, Horace E. Tate to Jimmy Carter, June 28, 1977, Donated Historical Material-Zbigniew Brzezinski, Box 14, Southern Africa, Jimmy Carter Library.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, p. 147.

<sup>15</sup> Coker, p. 148.

Thus, the issue of Namibia was used as a way to precipitate change in South Africa in a way that was more acceptable and, at the same time, unavoidable to South Africans.

South Africans could not ignore the issue of Namibia. The International Court of Justice had ruled that the South African mandate over Namibia was no longer legitimate and that Namibia deserved its independence. The United Nations backed that position. It only remained to be seen when and how South Africa would grant that independence. The Carter Administration, through the efforts of Donald McHenry, often used multilateral organizations to work toward that goal. The United States led these groups in arranging and mediating talks with the South African government and SWAPO. It even managed to bring those two opposing parties to negotiate together. McHenry also used such multilateral organizations to influence Security Council votes in the United Nations. The organizations formed coherent goals and policies directed toward achieving those goals. By focusing continued attention on those goals, the organizations hastened progress toward Namibian independence. McHenry's multilateral and moderate approach proved more effective than previous unilateral measures taken by the United States.

Vice President Walter Mondale also contributed to the United States' stand against racial inequality and South African domination of Namibia. His trip to Vienna to meet with Prime Minister Vorster of South Africa in May of 1977 was widely publicized and often cited by the Administration as evidence of their sincere efforts at Namibian independence and end to apartheid. No previous vice president had taken so active a role in African affairs. Mondale's actions showed the weight the Carter Administration gave to African issues. At the historic meeting, Mondale asserted that all Namibians' votes should have equal weight in elections. Vorster reacted negatively to such an idea. Black Namibians did not have legal status as equal citizens to white Namibians.<sup>16</sup> Blacks' full and equal participation in national elections would

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<sup>16</sup>Coker, p. 141.

have meant that whites may be governed by blacks' directives. Mondale's comments let South Africa know that it no longer could count on United States' tacit approval of its racist policies and institutions. In effect, Mondale foreshadowed the path that the Carter Administration would take with South African foreign policy.

In any study of Carter's foreign policy, Brzezinski provides a counter-point to the rest of the administration. If Young and the Congressional Black Caucus represented the liberal view on South African relations and Vance, McHenry and Mondale represented the moderate view, Zbigniew Brzezinski represented the conservative view. Brzezinski modeled his foreign policy ideas on his predecessors': his was a mind-set centered on the Cold War and realpolitik. The deterrence of communism in Africa was more important to him than human rights issues. Because of his views, Brzezinski more often than not tried to promote good relations between the United States and South Africa. He disapproved of Young's attacks on South Africa and urged South Africa to modify its policies, such as "separate development," instead of abandoning them, in order to avoid radicalism.<sup>17</sup> Majority rule, for Brzezinski, was not a mandatory goal to be achieved by South Africans. Maintaining South African support for the United States in the Cold War and providing economic opportunities for Americans were such goals. Brzezinski did deviate from his normal stance during the Kalahari incident of 1977 when the Soviets warned the United States that South Africa might have been testing nuclear devices. In this incident, Brzezinski worked with Soviet intelligence and condemned South Africa's behavior. However, he was still acting under a realist paradigm in order to protect American interest in nuclear non-proliferation. Thus, Brzezinski upheld realpolitik during the Carter administration, but he could not reverse Carter's policies on Namibia.

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<sup>17</sup>Coker, p. 138.

## **THE KEY PLAYERS AND THEIR ROLES:**

Carter utilized three political bodies to implement his policies concerning Namibia. Those bodies included the United Nations, the Contact Group, and his own administration. The United Nations provided a forum for the Carter Administration to prove its commitment to Namibia in the eyes of Third World leaders and to garner international approval of and support for the administration's policies. The Contact Group (also known as the Western Five) was composed of the western members of the United Nations Security Council, namely West Germany, France, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States. The Carter administration used that body to negotiate the hastening of Namibian independence. Such an international body allowed the United States to gain the trust of both the South African government and SWAPO. The Carter administration was able to work unilaterally to accomplish some of its goals. Secretary of State Vance and Vice President Mondale actively pursued Namibian independence through meetings with other heads of state and public press conferences. By employing the different channels available to him, Carter was able to direct international and domestic pressure on South Africa in order to induce change in the status of Namibia.

Carter had to walk a fine line among the complex and interwoven issues of international diplomacy. While he sought to enhance American relations with black African states and to further his own goals for southern Africa, he also had to consider his more traditional allies' views. Without pressure from Washington, many were unwilling to stick their necks out for Namibian independence because of realist concerns for security and economic prosperity at home and abroad. Because of Carter's electoral base

and personal beliefs, he was sensitive to stinging Third World criticism and attempted to alleviate black African concerns that the United States did not respond to their requests for assistance in furthering majority rule on the continent. In order to do so, Carter had to alter the direction of American diplomacy in the United Nations and bring western allies with him. This is not to say that Carter gave in to black African demands constantly or without justification. However, the late 1970s and early 1980s saw an increased receptivity of American diplomats to black African initiatives in the United Nations and a withdrawal of support for South Africa. Andrew Young, because of his personal, vehement dislike for white minority rule, embodied the new American consideration of African concerns. Black African states were more willing to trust Young and, therefore, cooperate with the United States during the Carter Administration. This lent credibility to the United States in southern Africa and, combined with the fact that many western powers already trusted the United States, helped promote United States-sponsored discussions on Namibian independence.

The Carter Administration utilized the United Nations, especially its Security Council, to pressure South Africa to grant Namibian independence but also to prevent more radical nations from pushing South Africa into a corner. Such was the case when Ambassador Young made a speech condemning South Africa's measures in Namibia while arguing to maintain South Africa's seat in the United Nations. He argued that keeping South Africa a member of the international body would allow international pressure to affect change in the Namibian situation.<sup>1</sup> The other members of the Security Council took their lead from the United States, and the United States maintained

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<sup>1</sup> NSA collection chronology, 5/24/79, p. 67.

traditional allies' backing by not promoting radical change or extremely detrimental actions against South Africa. The United Nations activities provided a forum in which the United States could give voice to its principles and views on the Namibian issue while influencing South African opinion. Carter let the South Africans know that the United States still represented a relatively moderate stance concerning South Africa in the United Nations. However, the message was sent that the United States would no longer tacitly support South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia. The issues would no longer be ignored by Washington, and the United States would no longer throw its weight around in the Security Council to protect South African interests from more radical nations' initiatives. Carter did not wholly support SWAPO or the front-line states in the United Nations, either. His administration knew it had to work to achieve cooperation from both sides of the Namibian independence debate. Young and McHenry avoided unnecessarily harsh measures, but they did not let up on the white South Africans. This new, open denunciation of South Africa also bolstered Third World opinion of the United States and helped build a trust between black Africa and the United States. This, in turn, strengthened domestic liberal support of Carter's presidency.

The issue of trust proved critical to Namibian negotiations. South African leaders believed that the United Nations remained biased in favor of SWAPO during the Carter administration, partially because of the United States' newly aggressive policies aimed at changing the face of southern Africa. Particularly, the South Africans wished the United Nations to "refrain from giving effect to the recognition by the General Assembly of SWAPO as 'sole and authentic representative of the people of Namibia.'"<sup>2</sup> The Contact

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Group worked diligently to keep South Africa from using the issue of bias as justification for hedging on negotiations.<sup>3</sup> This proved difficult because of the Contact Group's resolve to coerce the South Africans into doing something they did not want to do, namely, grant independence to Namibia through United Nations supervised elections.

SWAPO, too, wondered whether or not the Contact Group and United States were biased toward its opposition. United States officials at the time said that "SWAPO evidently finds it difficult to believe in an effective action by the west in its own favor."<sup>4</sup> This probably resulted from years of hypocrisy and insincerity on the part of United States presidential administrations since as Kennedy in dealing with the Namibian issue. Also, the United States did indeed have difficulty in dealing with SWAPO. One report claimed that "[SWAPO] is unable to present a programme of concrete SWAPO policy in Namibia or even to outline such a policy orally."<sup>5</sup> Because SWAPO leaders were often separated geographically in order to escape South African punishment by measures like self-inflicted exile, SWAPO did have trouble uniting its voice.

The Carter Administration's tone toward Africa in general and Namibian independence in particular reflected a striking difference in attitude between Carter and his predecessors. Carter reviewed many punitive and restrictive measures against South Africa in connection with that country's resistance to Namibian independence. He did not put into practice all of those measures, but the reviews in themselves suggest a giant

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<sup>2</sup> NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #1058.

<sup>3</sup> Current Foreign Relations, Issue No. 44, October 29, 1980, [Section entitled "Namibia: UN/South African Talks Completed"], NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #1103.

<sup>4</sup> State Department telegram, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #750.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



step forward in United States' support for South Africa's relinquishing its control over Namibia. Carter, Mondale, Young and others adamantly voiced their advocacy of majority rule and human rights in Namibia. They also worked within a regionalist framework, which pleased black African nations and many domestic groups, such as civil rights organizations. The Carter administration's policies proved more effective than Kissingerian realpolitik in dealing with the Namibian issue. Many domestic and foreign political leaders believed Carter to be more sympathetic to southern African concerns and better able to understand black African contentions because of his insistence on civil rights at home and abroad and his loosening of the grip of the Cold War on United States foreign policy. Carter's and his administration's rhetoric held weight for opponents and supporters because of its moral imperative and concrete outcomes. The novelty of a president truly thoughtful of southern African issues reaped benefits for Carter in foreign policy achievement and continued liberal backing in the United States.

## **ACT 1 UNFOLDED:**

The story of the Namibian independence process from 1977-1981 is long and elaborate. There were many overlapping bodies working for and against that goal. The United Nations, SWAPO, the Contact Group, the Carter administration, the South African government, and the front-line states comprise the key figures in this tale and are the focus in this recitation of it. While not all events in the drama can be meshed together succinctly, the highlights are presented to give an accurate and descriptive portrayal of how the Carter administration, working unilaterally and through multilateral organizations, initiated meaningful progress toward Namibian independence.

The stage of the story was set by events that occurred before Carter's presidency. Activities in 1975 and 1976 give a background for events that followed. The Turnhalle Constitutional Assembly, a South African-sponsored puppet government of Namibia, convened on September 1, 1975 and proposed to draft Namibia's first constitution. However, Namibians had not elected the members of the Assembly via free and fair elections. Instead, South Africa had kept many Namibian political organizations, such as the popular SWAPO, from participating in the elections. Racial divisions served as the foundation of the Turnhalle government. Each racial group received representation in areas where it dominated, and each minister on the Council of Ministers controlled the power of a veto.<sup>1</sup> These and other provisions foretold an inability to accomplish real progress on true Namibian independence, especially considering that the white minority

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<sup>1</sup> Memo, Tamoff to Cliff, May 9, 1977, White House Central Files, Box CO-53, Countries file-141 (South Africa), Jimmy Carter Library.

held disproportionate power to its population size.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, South Africa faced harsh international opposition to its implementation and control of the Turnhalle Assembly.

The first landmark United Nations resolution on Namibian independence, Security Council Resolution 385, passed the Security Council on January 30, 1976. This occurred during the Ford administration and reflected a changing posture in American foreign policy. However, it did not reflect a change in foreign policy paradigms. The Ford administration, Kissinger in particular, had become aware that currying the favor of black Africa was necessary to keep Soviet and Cuban influence out of Africa. The issues of human rights, majority rule, and regionalism had not replaced Cold War realpolitik, but United States officials spoke with a new rhetoric to appear in touch with black African concerns. After failing to thwart communism through the use of covert military force and CIA operations in Angola, Kissinger “knew he needed a new policy, especially for Africa, where black resentments in the remaining white-ruled nations seemed ready to erupt.”<sup>3</sup> He thought, “The Soviets, given a chance, would surely exploit that tension [in Africa]...”<sup>4</sup> Kissinger also worried about the effects of the fulfillment of the domino theory on his country’s credibility as a force willing to battle communism if he did not halt communist expansion in Africa.<sup>5</sup> African, European and Asian allies may have turned elsewhere for protection, and consequently influence, if they lost their belief in the United States as a capable ally. Kissinger stated his fears bluntly when he said, “if

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Isaacson, Kissinger: A Biography. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1992, p. 686.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 686.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 684.

Moscow gets away with this one (Angola), it will try again soon in some other area.”<sup>6</sup> As Walter Isaacson concludes, “Thus it was that a *realpolitik* analysis led to the adoption of an idealistic new component to American foreign policy.”<sup>7</sup>

Kissinger’s “chameleon-like ability to embrace views that first seemed alien to him” did lead to positive outcomes, like Zimbabwean independence and Resolution 385, despite his lack of moral conviction and zeal for ideological arguments concerning majority rule.<sup>8</sup> Resolution 385 provided an analysis of necessary conditions to be met before Namibian independence could be realized and furnished a basis for future resolutions and discussions on Namibia. In April 1978, a Canadian official claimed that the Contact Group’s detailed proposal for precipitating Namibian independence through elections was considered “[o]n the basis of Resolution 385.”<sup>9</sup> This document established a goal toward which the United Nations, the Contact Group, South Africa, Carter’s administration, SWAPO, and the front-line states needed to work.

Twelve points comprised the main body of the resolution.<sup>10</sup> The first six points condemned South Africa’s actions in Namibia, from its illegal occupation of its neighbor to its military build-up there in order to aid anti-communist forces in bordering Angola and carry out brutal policies of repression against SWAPO and other Namibian

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 684.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 686.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 686.

<sup>9</sup> Speech, Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs Jamieson to UN General Assembly, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #826.

<sup>10</sup> See UN Security Council Resolution 385, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #749, for the 12 points.

independence movements. The fourth point also demanded an end to the policy of bantustanization and recognition of Namibian territorial integrity.<sup>11</sup> The condemnatory points focused on issues that the international body felt impeded the process of Namibian elections, which the Security Council demanded in point seven. For example, as Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs Jamieson notes, “SWAPO was convinced that elections could not be held in the presence of South African forces, that the symbolic presence of even one South African soldier would provide a counterproductive psychological climate in the territory.”<sup>12</sup> Insistence on “free elections under the supervision of the United Nations” indicated an attempt by the international community to obstruct unilateral measures that might be taken by the South African government to achieve technical Namibian independence while keeping real control of the country in South Africa or, at least, in the hands of whites sympathetic to South Africa.<sup>13</sup> Point seven voiced international concerns that the United Nations remain integrally involved in the independence process for Namibia and that Pretoria relinquish authority over the creation and actions of any transition government which would author the first Namibian constitution.

The resolution demanded compliance and conciliatory measures from South Africa in its last four articles. (Article 8 said that the United Nations needed time to set up fair elections and allow Namibian political organizations to participate.) The demands

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<sup>11</sup> Bantustanization was a South African policy of returning black Namibians to their “homelands.” It, in effect, divided black Namibians and encouraged tribal animosity. Namibian territorial integrity was threatened by such measures.

<sup>12</sup> NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #826.

<sup>13</sup> See point 7 of Resolution 385.

largely dictated the rectification of South African activities that rendered necessary the first six points. Withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia proved to be the most controversial demand. South Africa intimated that their withdrawal would precipitate a communist-led overrun of Namibia. The white government did fear that SWAPO was a communist organization, but their suggestion probably had as much to do with trying to influence the United States to support them as with containment of actual communism. South Africa frequently used its status as a Cold War ally of the United States to coax the United States to support it in the realm of international relations. The United States often complied by wielding its veto power in the United Nations Security Council or by rhetorically justifying the South Africans' position. In the case of Resolution 385, however, the United States backed the majority opinion of the United Nations and voted for the resolution as part of Kissinger's "new" policies. Other demands of the resolution included the eradication of apartheid-type laws and practices in Namibia, the facilitation of return for political exiles and guarantee of their freedom and safety, and the release of political prisoners. South Africa agreed, in principle at least, to the latter demands.

Shortly after Carter's election in late 1976, he ordered a review of United States policy toward South Africa. This review set out Carter's objectives and contrasted them to previous administrations'.<sup>14</sup> For example, the review pointed out that Kissinger's lack of "prominent black Americans on his team...communicated a lack of sensitivity on the critical question of race" on his "shuttle operation" throughout Africa late in the Ford

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<sup>14</sup> U.S. Southern African Policy Review, Brzezinski to Tuchman, March 1, 1977, White House Central Files, Box CO-53, Countries file-141 (South Africa), Jimmy Carter Library.

administration.<sup>15</sup> “[A]n urgent need to correct the misinterpretation of past U.S. policy” toward South Africa was noted.<sup>16</sup> Kissinger’s trip “seemed to give legitimacy to the white officials in southern Africa, because of the relative absence of contact with the Africans,” in the words of administrators under Carter.<sup>17</sup>

In order to reverse United States policy on South Africa, the review suggested changes in economic ties between the two nations. In response to the accusation that only lip service was given to reformation of South Africa, the review stated that the “impulse must come from the government. to demonstrate concretely and creatively, in deed, not words our commitment to racial justice.”<sup>18</sup> Clearly, the Carter administration intended to produce results in Namibia, even if it meant taking economic risks. Morality superseded money to an extent on the Namibian issue. The Carter administration sent a strong message that the United States finally viewed Namibian independence as worth fighting for. The rhetoric used to placate the Third World and domestic liberals was to be replaced by genuine interest and action.

The most interesting and telling portion of the review discussed a possible oil embargo on South Africa. In the words of the review, “an oil squeeze could signal to the South African government a global intent on behalf of majority rule,” especially if coupled to a low price of gold.<sup>19</sup> This heightened effect would have occurred because of

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

the necessary and unique international cooperation among the United States, OPEC, and western allies in constructing such an embargo.<sup>20</sup> This section of the review did note Pretoria's inclination toward a "lager mentality" and its fear of African communism.<sup>21</sup> Carter's administration did not want the minority rule to set off a chain reaction increasing communist support for and hold over blacks in southern Africa. It might then "find itself locked into an east-west equation, on the same side as the white supremacists." something it strongly wished to avert.<sup>22</sup> Cold War worries took a back seat to human rights, however, as indicated by the following statement: "Even if this extreme scenario [escalating Cold War tensions] is overstated, can the United States pay the price, domestic and international, of standing by passively as racial violence escalates?"<sup>23</sup>

The review indicated the United States' concern about stability in Namibia. If an internal solution were followed in Namibia and a "government with whites and malleable 'chiefs'," like the Turnhalle Assembly, were established, violence would most likely ensue.<sup>24</sup> To prevent such disorder, Carter felt that the "U.S. has a crucial role to play, to provide for transfer of power to a truly legitimate government."<sup>25</sup> United States presidents had never taken such a strong and active position on Namibian independence.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



Carter sounded his new foreign policy objectives proudly and forcefully for the South Africans to hear and take note.

The Carter Administration condemned the Turnhalle Assembly and its elected Council of Ministers because they were illegitimate political bodies. On April 7, 1977, the United States had helped lead the United Nations to claim non-recognition of the Turnhalle Conference. The administration did not believe that internal solutions undertaken by South Africa could solve the dilemma of Namibian dissatisfaction with South African domination. Secretary Vance summed up the administration's opinion of Turnhalle. He said that "unilateral actions by South Africa, such as its decision to conduct elections in Namibia, cannot be recognized and will not result in a political process which has any international legitimacy."<sup>26</sup> It is remarkable that this denunciation did not come until Carter's administration was in office, almost two years after the initiation of the Turnhalle discussions. Later in the Carter presidency, the Turnhalle Council of Ministers spoke before the Subcommittee on Africa of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs to defend its December 4, 1978 elections in the name of self-determination.<sup>27</sup> The Council also noted its anti-communist stance in an apparent effort to remind the United States of its role as Cold War ally.<sup>28</sup> The United States did not waiver; it never recognized the Turnhalle government as legitimate.

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<sup>26</sup> NSA collection chronology, 9/29/78, p. 64.

<sup>27</sup> Speech, Council of Ministers of the Territory of South-West Africa to Subcommittee on Africa of Committee on Foreign Affairs of U.S. House of Representatives, September 22, 1980, White House Central Files, Box CO-54, Countries file-143 (South-west Africa), Jimmy Carter Library.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

In a widely reported press conference, Vice President Mondale discussed his meeting with South African Prime Minister Vorster in Vienna on May 19-20, 1977. Mondale had taken a strong line with Vorster and insisted on improved conditions for southern African blacks. His call for full political participation by all people in South Africa and Namibia irritated white South Africans but commended him to black Africans. This resulted from his answer to a question to define "full political participation" and his answer that it was "the same thing" as the concept of "one man one vote."<sup>29</sup> Mondale also warned that although "our basic objective is not to have a confrontation," the United States "would take steps true to our beliefs and values."<sup>30</sup> South Africa could no longer "rely on any illusions that the U.S. will in the end intervene to save South Africa from the policies it is pursuing."<sup>31</sup> According to Secretary Vance, Mondale "underscored the fact that our policy was rooted in our view of human rights, and was not solely based on anti-Communism."<sup>32</sup> Mondale made clear the United States' preparation to reverse its opposition to mandatory sanctions should South Africa not cooperate on majority rule issues in southern Africa.<sup>33</sup> The vice president's message asserted that the United States was willing to worsen relations with South Africa if the issues of apartheid, and Rhodesian and Namibian independence were not satisfactorily solved. It also re-

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<sup>29</sup> Walter Mondale Press Conference, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #753.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Cyrus Vance, Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1983, p. 265.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 265.

emphasized the United States' commitment to Namibia. previously a non-issue or one of little importance, under Carter.

To American civil rights advocates, Mondale's interview showed Carter's administration's support for their cause. In one answer, Mondale used the American civil rights struggles to advocate full political participation abroad because it "has contributed enormously to the health, vitality, the stability, the economic growth, the social health and the spiritual health of our country..."<sup>34</sup> Pretoria often frowned upon comparisons between the end to the South African apartheid system and the American civil rights achievements. Many South African whites professed that a black South African was not the civic equivalent of a black American and rejected notions of black South Africans contributing to South Africa in any way other than as laborers. (This is not to argue that they truly valued black Americans, either.) Mondale's answer was designed to win domestic support, but also to proclaim the Carter administration's belief in racial equality.

Vorster reacted indignantly to Mondale's comments in private but publicly kept his tone amenable on the topics of Namibia and Rhodesia. His only possible reason for maintaining a cooperative posture was to evade international retaliation or increased pressure. Thus, Mondale accomplished his mission. Vorster knew the Americans would not let South Africa sweep Namibia under the rug any longer. South Africa could stall, but the situation quickly was becoming critical. The Carter administration had established itself as a new force with which to be reckoned by the South Africans, and South Africa had no choice but to flow with the current of international pressure.

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<sup>34</sup> NSA microfiche collection , microfiche #753.

The vice president at times used his connections to front-line states' leaders to help promote United Nations' supervised change in Namibia. In response to a letter from President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia in June 1977, Mondale did just that. The National Security Council drafted the letter to reflect the importance of Kaunda's cooperation to the United States' efforts in southern Africa.<sup>35</sup> Black African nations held some influence over SWAPO and could be used to facilitate SWAPO's acceptance of United Nations' proposals. If the front-line states could have convinced SWAPO of the United States' sincerity in dealing with Namibian independence, SWAPO may have trusted the United States to conduct fair talks with the parties concerned with Namibian independence. SWAPO's occasional intransigence caused ripples in the negotiation process and gave Pretoria an excuse to further stall and hedge. Front-line states could greatly help eliminate such a disruption in the independence process, and the Carter administration unilaterally tried to earn the front-line states' approval and trust. Mondale asked Kaunda to "move to engage SWAPO and the United Nations more directly in consultations leading to an internationally acceptable settlement."<sup>36</sup> He also reaffirmed the United States' dedication "to the struggle for human rights" and commitment "to working for a just peace and self-determination in the region."<sup>37</sup> Such reassurance helped promote good relations between the United States and black Africa as well as encourage change in southern Africa.

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<sup>35</sup> Letter, Walter Mondale to President Kenneth Kaunda, July 12, 1977, White House Central Files. Box CO-53, Countries file-141 (South Africa), Jimmy Carter Library.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

After President Carter met with President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania on August 5, 1977, he offered an impromptu press conference on southern Africa. His answers to reporters' questions reflected optimism and encouragement about talks with South Africa and SWAPO. In Carter's words, "I think all parties have come a long way in the last few weeks..."<sup>38</sup> Although Nyerere strongly advocated strict sanctions, Carter believed that sustaining South African cooperation should have been the main consideration. He had "lately been encouraged by constructive moves in South Africa concerning Namibia," and did not want to obstruct further gains.<sup>39</sup> Additional sanctions would have been considered "if the South Africans become an obstacle to further progress."<sup>40</sup> Carter's administration displayed an ability to gain the trust of both SWAPO and South Africa in order to keep talks on Namibia on the table. The advances made by all sides by this point were unprecedented, and the administration's good judgment deserves the credit. Titrating the right amount of pressure on Pretoria at the right times while not compromising the United States' moral position against minority rule took skill and finesse.

The United States deputy ambassador to the United Nations and very skilled diplomat, Donald McHenry, presided over the Contact Group, which looked to the United States to provide leadership. On October 24, 1977, the Contact Group members met to discuss South Africa and Namibia.<sup>41</sup> The meeting was aimed at establishing a common

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<sup>38</sup> Jimmy Carter Press Conference, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #755.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> State Department telegram, USUN to Cyrus Vance, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #790.

position for the five countries to take on Namibian independence initiatives. According to a telegram circulated among various United States embassies by Ambassador Young. “The four [other countries in the Contact Group] looked to the US ‘as the member apparently ready to move farther than the rest of us.’”<sup>42</sup> The telegram indicated that McHenry said the United States was considering “an appropriately worded mandatory arms embargo” to replace the voluntary one the United States had in place.<sup>43</sup> Obviously, the United States wanted to establish a stronger position than previous administrations had against South African domination of Namibia. The Contact Group also recognized the need to draw a common line beyond which they would not be pushed by other United Nations members. Great Britain voiced its worries about being forced to decrease trade with South Africa, a sentiment common among the Contact Group members.<sup>44</sup> The telegram’s concluding comments included a statement that the “four [other countries in the Contact Group] were quite clearly looking to the US to take the lead and anxious lest they should be left behind.”<sup>45</sup> The Carter administration’s drive for releasing Namibia from its colonial yoke motivated other countries. The United States’ traditional western allies did not wish to take the responsibility for forsaking South African interests unless the United States provided the impetus. Thus, the Contact Group gave McHenry and the United States a vehicle through which they could amass western support for Namibian independence.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

The Carter administration faced its first instrumental vote on Namibia in the Security Council with Draft Resolution S/12211 in late 1977. The United States vetoed this resolution on the basis that it would have invoked Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. Chapter VII would have called for a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa because that country constituted a threat to international peace and security. The western countries of the Security Council disagreed with that assessment. Such a resolution would have singled out South Africa for extreme humiliation in response to its human rights violations in a world with many countries committing similar atrocities. The western countries did not wish to justify South Africa's policies, but they did not feel that those policies, in light of other world events, compelled the United Nations to invoke Chapter VII. Also, the Security Council wished to bring about reform and South African cooperation in accomplishing Namibian independence. The United States did not want to risk a reactionary response by South African politicians for the benefit of their constituents or as a genuine response to Chapter VII. Pin-pointing South Africa as the world's pariah nation would most likely have created a siege mentality among South African leaders and hampered or stalemated negotiations. The Carter administration felt that the South African government had made some progress by that point and that the white South Africans needed positive encouragement to continue in that tread. Carter's administrators decided to take a moderate stance. The United States already had in place a voluntary arms embargo to South Africa. The benefits of S/12211 did not outweigh the risks of alienating South Africa and establishing a more skeptical attitude within the white regime. On November 4, 1977, the Security Council passed Resolution 418, which

was a modified version of S/12211 assembled by the western nations of the Security Council.<sup>46</sup> Resolution 418 implemented a mandatory arms embargo, but it lacked the inflammatory invocation of Chapter VII. That the United States strongly supported Resolution 418 showed that the Carter administration's reservations about S/12211 were aimed at avoiding an unnecessary breakdown in talks with South Africa, not at lessening the pressure on South Africa to bring freedom to Namibia.

The Contact Group accomplished its most important deed when it presented its proposal for the implementation of Resolution 385 to the United Nations General Assembly on April 10, 1978.<sup>47</sup> Although the Contact Group failed "to bring about a transition to independence [for Namibia] during 1978," it succeeded in drawing up a proposal to which both sides of the issue contributed.<sup>48</sup> The proposal detailed the electoral process that should take place in Namibia under United Nations supervision, the purpose of the elected body, and the conditions under which the elections should occur.

Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs Jamieson followed the announcement of the Contact Group proposal with a statement entitled "The Search for a Solution in Namibia," which he addressed to the General Assembly on April 25, 1978. He gave the statement on behalf of the Contact Group nations and summarized their efforts to fulfill Namibians' dream of independence through Resolution 385. The Turnhalle constitution brought denunciation from Jamieson as an internationally

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<sup>46</sup> NSA collection chronology, 11/14/77, p. 60.

<sup>47</sup> NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #826.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



unacceptable unilateral measure and was characterized as the stimulus for Contact Group action. Jamieson said, "...South Africa's presence in Namibia is illegal and must be ended. At the same time, we have to recognize the facts of life: that South Africa controls and remains in Namibia and has done so for 60 years."<sup>49</sup> That quotation captured the Contact Group's dismissal of the Turnhalle Assembly while confirming the group's willingness to work with South Africa to find a reasonable solution. The Contact Group claimed no authority to act on Namibian independence other than "the responsibilities which [they] bear as members of the U.N. Security Council."<sup>50</sup> Jamieson pointed to the original mistrust of SWAPO and South Africa for the Contact Group "as a benchmark for measuring the distance which [the Contact Group had] come since that time." and claimed that "that distance is very considerable."<sup>51</sup> Thus setting up his remarks, Jamieson expressed the genuine adaptability and optimism of the Contact Group. Both of those qualities permitted the group to work more effectively with all parties concerned than had any previous effort.

Jamieson's speech outlined two unprecedented landmarks for yielding Namibian independence. First, the South African government earlier had agreed in late April 1977 to deny the Turnhalle constitution and create a central authority over Namibia while the United Nations directed elections for a new assembly. South Africa later flip-flopped on this issue, but it was an important initial step and one of which the Contact Group could

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

be proud. The achievement indicated that South Africa knew it would have to cooperate with international pressure. Second, SWAPO and the South African government both had sent representatives to the same negotiating table in February 1978. The fact that those two organizations recognized one another and agreed to talk face-to-face represented a major breakthrough for the Contact Group. Both sides acknowledged the need for compromise and fruitful exchange of views. Trust remained an issue, but these two steps would not have happened had not the Contact Group established some measure of trust with SWAPO and South Africa. As Jamieson put it. "...it was essential to neither endorse nor challenge the position of any party..."<sup>52</sup>

Jamieson's description of the changing stances of South Africa and SWAPO proves particularly fascinating and informative. He asserted that "there has been a considerable narrowing of the differences between the two parties."<sup>53</sup> South Africa had moved from stalwartly backing its Turnhalle Assembly to accepting the major provisions of Resolution 385. SWAPO had come to assent to a small presence of South African military forces (1,500) during Namibian elections and to agree to accept the results of those elections. These terms were approved after months of tiring negotiations by the Contact Group in New York, Cape Town, Pretoria, and other African capitals. The Five even met with front-line state presidents in order to incorporate their opinions into the proposal and heed their concerns. Working with black African leaders illustrated the Contact Group's emphasis on regionalism. The genuineness of the Contact Group in

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

trying to find a solution that grappled with human rights, racial issues, and regionalism contributed to its success. The unprecedented achievements of the Contact Group resulted from its unprecedented outlook. Arguably, the Carter administration forged that outlook.

In some cases, SWAPO believed that the Contact Group had not pushed South Africa far enough. Shortly after the Kassinga Massacre of June 1978 in which South African forces killed Namibian refugees, SWAPO fired off a harsh criticism of the Contact Group. SWAPO asserted that “The fundamental flaw in these diplomatic efforts of the Five [to free Namibia] has been the erroneous assumption that it is SWAPO that must be pressured.”<sup>54</sup> It also felt at that time that “because of [the Five’s] vast economic ties with racist South Africa, the Five’s capacity to pressure South Africa is seriously compromised.”<sup>55</sup> The Contact Group tried to resolve SWAPO’s concerns by maintaining pressure on South Africa and noting to the resistance movement that diplomacy did necessitate some compromise. The strong criticism came at a difficult time for the Contact Group, which needed to condemn South Africa without making it look like it had done so because of Third World pressure. The Contact Group, constrained by the need to maintain cooperation on all sides, could not act fast enough or drive South Africa far enough to satisfy many of SWAPO’s demands. SWAPO also had some unrealistic demands. For example, the Contact Group would have had to sacrifice all possibility of South African cooperation had it adamantly required the removal of all South African

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<sup>54</sup> Telegram, USUN (Young) to Jessie Williams. NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #790.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

forces from Namibia, which was one of SWAPO's original demands. Nonetheless, the Contact Group succeeded in bringing the two opposing sides to the negotiating table and in drawing up a proposed plan for implementing Resolution 385.

The United Nations, with the support of the United States, established UNTAG, United Nations Transition Assistance Group, in July of 1978 with Security Council Resolution 431. UNTAG comprised thousands of United Nations troops intended to facilitate and watch over Namibian elections. Many feared violence would erupt from either side during the Namibian elections, and UNTAG would prevent that. The United States did not send troops to serve in UNTAG, but it did agree to provide transportation for UNTAG troops.<sup>56</sup> After the debacle in Vietnam, it is not surprising that the United States hesitated to send men and women possibly to fight in Namibia. Also, it was customary for the United States and the Soviet Union not to send troops to United Nations endeavors during the Cold War. However, the agreement to provide transportation showed the Carter administration's willingness to back United Nations' initiatives concerning Namibia. It also reaffirmed United States' support for Resolution 385 and peaceful, meaningful elections involving adult Namibians of all races in an atmosphere free from intimidation and disorder. Soon after the establishment of UNTAG, the South African government decided to allow Kurt Waldheim's appointed special representative to Namibia, Martti Ahtisaari of Finland, to start readying Namibia for the fulfillment of Resolution 385.<sup>57</sup> South African Foreign Minister Botha's words of

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<sup>56</sup> Memorandum. Assistant Secretary of Defense to Joint Chiefs of Staff, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #853.

<sup>57</sup> NSA collection chronology, 8/11/78, p. 63.

acceptance to Ahtisaari seemed to indicate a purposeful shift in white South African attitudes toward the United Nations' attempt at Namibian independence and may have encouraged the western members of the Security Council to maintain their current level of pressure on South Africa .

Botha rejected the recommendations of Ahtisaari on September 20, 1978, however. During the Carter administration, South Africa often flip-flopped in its cooperation with the United Nations and the United States. In this case, South Africa wanted to pursue a unilateral approach to Namibian independence just as Resolution 385 had tried to avoid. In effect, South Africa dismissed Resolution 385. Set-backs like this occurred when South African officials felt they had gone too far in collaborating with the United Nations or international opinion. A kind of two steps forward, one step back pattern developed as South Africa reluctantly allowed itself to be pulled into a discussion on Namibian independence.

Under the United States' leadership, the Security Council passed Resolution 435 on September 9, 1978. This resolution incorporated many aspects of the debate over Namibia and reiterated much of Resolution 385.<sup>58</sup> The implementation of UNTAG was made official by this resolution, and UNTAG was given twelve months to help "ensure the early independence of Namibia through free and fair elections under the supervision and control of the United Nations."<sup>59</sup> Arguably, the most important point of the resolution was the nullification of unilateral measures taken by the "illegal administration

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<sup>58</sup> U.N. Security Council Resolution 435, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #863.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

in Namibia.”<sup>60</sup> This phrase referred to the South African government and the Democratic Turnhalle Council.

After earlier accepting Resolution 435, South Africa switched its position once again on May 5, 1980. It stipulated seven conditions for implementation of the United Nations settlement plan devised in accordance with the proposal by the Contact Group.<sup>61</sup> The seven conditions constituted symbolic importance more than actual obstruction to the resolution’s implementation. The State Department considered the possibility that South Africa intended the conditions to be a delay tactic.<sup>62</sup> It concluded, however, that “the conditions seem manageable, and South African officials have sent various signals of a flexible and forthcoming attitude.”<sup>63</sup> This statement attests to the success of the Carter administration in walking the thin line between pushing South Africa into a belligerent state and being ineffectively soft on the white regime.

On June 13, 1980, the United States supported Security Council Resolution 473 that condemned South African apartheid. During the same time period, Carter was immersed in dealing with the Iranian hostage crisis, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The significance of majority rule to the Carter administration is evidenced by the fact that the administration acted on that issue despite other, critical foreign policy concerns. The resolution demanded five measures to be taken by South Africa in order to

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> *Current Foreign Relations*, Issue No. 20, May 14, 1980, [Section entitled “South Africa Reply on Namibia”], NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #1058.

<sup>62</sup> State Department memo, NSA microfiche collection, microfiche #1061.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

guarantee equal rights for all of its citizens. Carter's administration and the United Nations were better able to make such harsh demands on Pretoria after they had secured Pretoria's acceptance of the United Nations plan for Namibian independence. Carter did not reward South Africa's cooperation with undue lenience. He continued to take a stand against South Africa's racially-motivated policies and to pursue human rights and majority rule in southern Africa.

The Carter administration also believed in using economic pressure to pursue its objectives in Namibia. Though hardly an advocate of Constructive Engagement, Carter attempted to bring change through example and economic influence in the marketplace. A set of principles to be followed by American businesses in dealing with South Africa amassed wide-spread support among administrators and businessmen alike. The Reverend Leon Sullivan, a member of GM's board of directors, authored the Sullivan Principles in 1977 "to enhance the progressive impact of US corporations in South Africa."<sup>64</sup> The Sullivan Principles provided an alternative to economic sanctions that would have had negative effects on American business and irritated South Africa. Carter favored the Sullivan Principles over punitive measures despite his recognition of the potential value of sanctions and willingness to use them if necessary. Carter did come under criticism for not punishing companies that did not adhere tightly to the Sullivan Principles, but his advocacy of them symbolized his commitment to reforming South Africa's labor structure and unfair hiring and wage policies.<sup>65</sup> He hoped such reform

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<sup>64</sup> Schraeder, p. 217.

<sup>65</sup> For criticism of Carter's dealings with U.S. multinational corporations in South Africa and his economic policies toward South Africa, see Coker, p. 153.

would result from capitalistic influence rather than aggressive infliction of sanctions.<sup>66</sup>

Many companies voluntarily observed the principles, indicating strong domestic support for Carter's policies and advocacy of change in southern Africa.

As the curtain closed on Carter's term in office, his administration had established the momentum for Namibian independence. Although Carter's attention had been diverted to other issues later in his presidency, his and his administration's stance toward South Africa concerning Namibia never changed. Also, despite less frequent public statements on Namibia by Carter, his administrators, such as McHenry, continued to voice the United States' constant and unyielding message on the international stage. South Africa and the world knew that collaboration between the United States and the apartheid regime would not occur behind a rhetorical facade during Carter's presidency as it had under previous presidents'. The Carter administration's performance throughout the drama of the Namibian independence process was no act. For once, regionalism and human rights maintained center stage under the harsh lights of international scrutiny. This was the only way in which to truly open Act 1 of the Namibian independence process, and Carter was able to do it.

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<sup>66</sup>Coker, p. 153.



## **EPILOGUE:**

Carter clearly ushered in new American foreign policy priorities. Human rights, regionalism, majority rule, and moral imperatives dominated in an area traditionally reserved for globalism and realpolitik. Carter was able to put Cold War concerns to the side while he dealt with the pressing issues in Namibia. Kissinger had never been able to do so. Despite his rhetoric, neither had Kennedy. Johnson had had no desire to deal with Africa at all. Carter's ability to prefigure the post-Cold War in foreign policy paved the way for his administration's use of a novel blend of regionalism, emphasis on human rights, and work within multilateral organizations. Carter and his administration, therefore, broke new ground in dealing effectively with southern African issues.

Novelty does not inherently denote value. Carter's administration's policies toward Namibia also proved fruitful. The development of a measure of trust between the administration and South Africa, and the administration and SWAPO, facilitated constructive change in Namibia. The Contact Group's work significantly contributed to that trust. The deep suspicions among concerned parties on the Namibian issue had long hindered negotiations, and Namibians had paid the price in suffering under harsh minority rule. McHenry's leadership forced the Contact Group to be a useful body for working with both formerly intransigent sides. McHenry and the Contact Group were also the first party able to bring South Africa and SWAPO together for talks on Namibia. Never before had anyone achieved face-to-face discussion between those two parties. Kissinger had believed that such an accomplishment was unrealistic. Without Carter's emphasis on

human rights, McHenry would not have been appointed nor have had the opportunity to affect change in Namibia.

Carter's unilateral measures also expedited Namibian independence. His consistent pressure on South Africa, constrained by realistic expectations, formulated a new tone toward that country. South Africa was not able to negotiate as an anti-communist ally with the Carter administration as it had done with previous administrations. Carter viewed South Africa in light of its human rights violations, not its position in the Cold War. At first, South Africa had been confounded by such a change in United States policy. Then, the white regime realized the urgency in the Carter message and knew that it had to respond to the Americans' pressure. In essence, the Carter administration was the first to initiate real change in the status of Namibia.

As an extension of his Namibian policies, Carter also awakened South Africa to Americans' intolerance of apartheid. Thus, by using Namibia as a symbol, Carter influenced race relations in South Africa. His judicious stance eased South Africa into an era of reform. In the mid to late 1970s, South Africa was not ready for ultimatums or all-or-nothing demands. Carter had to pursue his objectives carefully so as not to permanently damage the delicate negotiations on majority rule in southern Africa. At that point in time, the possibility of South Africa slipping into a siege mentality was very real. In order to bring racial equality to southern Africa, Carter knew he needed to start by gently forcing South Africa to let go of its hegemonic control of its borderlands. He was able to do so without compromising his objectives, and that led to a loosening of South Africa's grip on Namibia. Eventually, after gradual steps toward racial equality in

southern Africa, South Africa came to realize that apartheid was a doomed system, and the late 1980s saw the end of that system. Carter's influence on the Namibian independence process was one of the steps toward racial equality in the region.

The Reagan administration brought a return to Constructive Engagement and Cold War-dominated foreign policy, and the Bush administration continued in that tread during its first year.<sup>1</sup> In fact, both administrations linked implementation of Resolution 435 to Cuban withdrawal from Angola in order to achieve a measure of Cold War success in the region. The restoration of *realpolitik* did nothing to accelerate the Namibian independence process. Not until March 21, 1990, did Namibia gain full independence from South Africa through implementation of Resolution 435, which the Carter administration had supported.<sup>2</sup> On that historic date, a million and a half black Namibians obtained their freedom from minority-rule, and those like John Ya-Otto, who eventually had gone into self-exile, could return to their native country as the political equals of their white counterparts. Only the lessening of Cold War hostilities made the Bush administration able to cooperate with the Soviets and Cubans to accomplish its goal of linkage. Thus, Bush was still fearful of communist expansion into Namibia and was unwilling to uncouple Namibia completely from the Cold War in 1989-90, despite the progress Carter made using post-Cold War foreign policy. Even though Carter's post-Cold War outlook did not endure, it did establish the necessary basis for subsequent

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<sup>1</sup> Events in South Africa and the Soviet Union in 1989 altered U.S. foreign policy in southern Africa. Frederik de Klerk and Mikhail Gorbachev led reforms in their countries during the Bush administration. President Bush re-evaluated U.S. objectives in southern Africa because of the apparent decrease in Cold War tensions and willingness of South Africa to reconsider its racist policies. For a discussion on these events, see Schraeder's book, pp. 236-246.

<sup>2</sup> Schraeder, p. 255.

negotiations on Namibia and forced United States foreign policy to deal with the issue of Namibian independence. In essence, that outlook initiated discussion on Namibian independence among interested parties and made the United States the leader of the western world in backing human rights and majority rule in southern Africa.

Without the Carter administration, independence would have been slower in coming to Namibia. The value of Carter's policies cannot be measured by the lack of Namibian independence at the end of his presidential term. His actions and words put in motion the gigantic machinery of releasing one nation from the domination of another, as well as one race from another. His policies were long-term although his presidency was not. One must evaluate Carter's break from containment and the Cold War by its foresight, consider his emphasis on human rights by its insight, and measure his achievements by their distance from his starting point. In that manner, Carter and his administration must be viewed as a success in "hastening the inevitable day of freedom" for Namibia.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, p. 146.

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The National Security Archives microfiche collection called "South Africa and the United States: the Making of Foreign Policy, 1962-1989" provided the most useful primary sources for this paper. The archives assembled this body of materials, which includes the microfiche documents plus two bound volumes of indexes. The microfiche themselves contain State Department telegrams, personal memos, press releases, United Nations Resolutions, magazine articles, and many other types of resources. The indexes provide abstracts of the microfiche materials, a chronology, a glossary, and other helpful guides to the collection. The work of the NSA and its collection have proven invaluable to the creation of this thesis.

The Jimmy Carter Library in Atlanta, Georgia, has also proven valuable to this work. Although much information and many documents from the Carter administration are yet to be declassified, some of the 1977-1981 paper trail is now available to researchers. Most of the information gleaned from the library for this thesis consisted of administration memos, letters, and speeches. Due to lack of time and convenience, not all of the relevant boxes of information at the library were examined thoroughly. However, this thesis contains a substantial amount of primary source information from the library, and that information is supportive of the conclusions drawn from other primary and secondary sources.

Other primary sources for this thesis include published works, such as personal memoirs and articles. Such sources used for this thesis include memoirs of high-ranking foreign policy officials. Books by President Carter, Cyrus Vance, and Henry Kissinger provided much useful information. Examination of these works gave insight into not only the factual knowledge of America foreign policy but also into the personalities of the authors.

Individual primary sources are listed in the footnotes of the thesis.

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