

Behind Linkage Diplomacy: The Brazzaville Accord Revisited

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After several months of negotiations mediated by the United States; South Africa, Cuba and Angola signed a peace agreement in Brazzaville on 13 December, 1988 the agreement provided for independence of Namibia in line with Resolution 435 (1978) of United Nations Security Council and the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. This was followed by the signing of protocols on 22 December at the United Nations headquarters in New York. The Cuban leader Fidel Castro hailed the accord as marking the end of "one of the most glorious chapters" in his country's history.¹

It took ten rounds of bargaining before agreement was reached on all major issues. However, prior to this final series of talks, numerous other attempts to reach a negotiated settlement of the Namibian independence problem had been made without success. South Africa had been able to defy the UN and World opinion over its illegal occupation of Namibia since its mandate to rule the territory was terminated by the world body in 1966. The internationalization and recasting of Namibian problem in the context of the cold war, with attendant implications for Angola's security, was a major obstacle to reaching a negotiated settlement.

This article makes a critical analysis of the role played by the United States in the search for such a solution, with special reference to the policy of linking Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola to Namibia's independence. It discusses the terms, and the implications of the Brazzaville accord for Angola's security, and sheds light on the circumstances that facilitates the conclusion of this historic pact.

Namibia as a Cold War Problem

The insistence by the United States and South Africa on the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola as a condition for Namibia's independence had been one of the most serious obstacles to reaching a settlement.² Linkage of the two issues was introduced in the already protracted negotiations for Namibia's independence by the new administration of the U.S. under President Ronald Reagan who came to power in January 1981. In March, the same year, senior South African defence officers visited the United States. Later Dirk Mudge and Peter Kalangula, both leaders in the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) and the South African sponsored "interim government" of Namibia, and Jonas Savimbi, the leader of the Angolan rebel movement, the UNITA, also visited Washington. The

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conditions for holding internationally supervised elections in Namibia that the DTA leaders presented while in the U.S. included withdrawal of Cuban troops from, and destruction of SWAPO bases in Angola.³

South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha, and the Defence Minister Magnus Malan also visited the United States. The South African officials informed Washington that non-acceptance of a SWAPO victory was their country's bottomline bargaining position over Namibia.⁴ In the course of these meetings the U.S. accepted the view that, if South Africa was to be persuaded to accept the implementation of U.N Security Council Resolution 435 (1978), which was the world body's plan for the independence of Namibia, then its objections to certain aspects of the resolution and its regional security concerns should be addressed. Washington made it clear that it would use persuasion, rather than coercion, against Pretoria and that it would maintain normal relations with the regime. This was the policy of "constructive engagement". In fact the U.S., South Africa, and the interim government of Namibia had worked out a common approach to the negotiations for a settlement of the Namibian problem. This included agreement on: (1) the need, and measures, to counter Soviet influence in Southern Africa; (2) plans to amend or modify Security Council Resolution 435 (1978); (3) creating conditions for Western-style democracy and the free enterprise economic system in an independent Namibia; and (4) promoting peaceful change, while undermining the role of armed struggle as a means of national liberation. Above all, the United States secured the support of South Africa and DTA leaders in demanding the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola as a condition for Namibia's independence. Then it continued to cast itself in the role of a mediator.

The U.S. was a member of the Western Contact Group established in April 1977 with the objective of trying to broker an internationally acceptable settlement of the Namibian problem. Other members of the group were the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, and Canada. The group was the main architect of the proposal for a settlement that was accepted by South Africa, in principle, and by SWAPO and the Frontline States. Its strategy included shielding South Africa from UN sanctions, while seeking an internationally acceptable settlement. By mid-1980, the Contact Group diplomacy appeared to be on the verge of producing such a settlement as by then SWAPO, the UN and the Frontline States had met virtually all South Africa's demands.⁵ So to secure an agreement on a date for a ceasefire between SWAPO and South African forces, and on starting implementation of the UN plan for Namibia's independence, the UN Secretary General arranged the Geneva Conference which held from 7 to 14 January, 1981. South Africa sent the Administrator General of Namibia, Danie Hough, as head of the

delegation, and DTA leaders to attend the conference. This in itself was a sign that Pretoria was not yet ready for a settlement. The SWAPO delegation was led by Sam Nujoma. Observers from the Contact Group, the OAU, the Frontline States and Nigeria also attended. The meeting collapsed without the main issues being discussed.

The Reagan administration sought to influence other members of the Contact Group to accommodate its Southern Africa policy. It wanted Security Council Resolution 435 (1978) be amended so that constitutional principles for Namibia could be adopted before the UN plan was implemented. Washington's Western allies warned it that the Soviet Union would veto proposals to amend the resolution.⁶ Consequently, the U.S. adopted a strategy of advocating the need to "strengthen" and "complement" the resolution before it could be implemented. This was to be done, among other things, by adopting constitutional principles and reaching agreement on the electoral system prior to such implementation. The Contact Group embraced this strategy at the meeting held in Paris in July 1981. Then at the Group's New York meeting of September 1981, adoption of constitutional principles and the electoral system were put in phase one of a three-phase negotiating plan.⁷ This indicates that the matter was accorded top priority. This plan was accepted by SWAPO and South Africa.

The question is: why did the Reagan administration want Security Council Resolution 435 (1978) "strengthened" or "complemented"? In so far as the *a priori* adoption of constitutional principles was seen as a way of doing this, the answer is evident from the nature of the principles drafted by Washington and other members of the Contact Group. These contained provisions relating to guarantees for private property, individual freedoms, and they included provisions for separation of judicial, legislative and executive powers.⁸ It is evident from the nature of the constitutional principles that the U.S. and other members of the Contact Group were taking measures to ensure that an independent Namibia would remain in the sphere of influence of the West. Since under the UN plan the independence constitution was to be adopted by a two thirds majority of members of the constituent assembly, the Western countries were also concerned with adopting an electoral system for Namibia that would make it difficult for SWAPO, which was considered to be radical and pro-Moscow, to get such a majority in the assembly. Their argument, which was also acceptable to South Africa, that the electoral system for Namibia should ensure fair representation for all political groups in the country, should be seen in the same perspective. And so should their proposals, rejected by SWAPO, that 50 percent of the members of the constituent assembly should be elected using a proportional representation electoral system, and the other 50 percent using a plurality system.

While the Reagan administration did not have much difficulty in convincing the allies of the U.S. to accept the modifications to Security Council Resolution 435 (1978), the same was not the case with its linkage of Cuban troops withdrawal from Angola to Namibia's independence. Over this policy, the U.S. stood virtually alone. As OAU interim Secretary-General Peter Onu observed, neither the people of Namibia nor the independence of Namibia and the presence of anybody, whether Cuban or any other in Angola.⁹ The United Nations Security Council formally rejected linkage through Resolution 539 of 1983, adopted by a vote of 14 to none, with the U.S. abstaining.¹⁰ In 1985, addressing a ministerial meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of Non-Aligned countries on Namibia in New Delhi, India, SWAPO President Sam Nujoma argued that after four years, the only result achieved by linkage was "to help South Africa to kill, arrest, and torture many more Namibians. It has failed to coerce Angola and other Frontline States into abandoning the struggle against colonialism, apartheid and imperialism. Similarly, the diabolical policy of 'constructive engagement' has not helped to create conditions for a peaceful change in the apartheid system in South Africa".¹¹

Linkage was conceived to serve the interests of Washington. Its essence was to use the Namibian problem to achieve the objective of reducing Soviet influence in Southern Africa which, from the point of view of the Reagan administration, Cuban troop withdrawal would represent. So strong was its resolve on this issue that the U.S. was prepared to sacrifice the unity of the Contact Group to pursue its cold war objectives. France formally withdrew from the Contact Group in 1983. Thereafter, Washington seized the initiative in the search for a negotiated settlement. Reagan administration officials held a series of meetings with their Angolan counterparts in an attempt to reach an agreement about Cuban troops withdrawal. Very little progress was made.

Apart from diplomacy, the U.S., in cooperation with South Africa, also applied military pressure against Angola to force it to accept linkage and to agree to accommodate UNITA. In July 1985, the U.S. Congress repealed the Clark Amendment which had prohibited U.S. military assistance to Angolan rebels. Angola reacted by stopping all contacts with Reagan administration officials. In fact the U.S. government had started supplying arms to UNITA in 1982.¹²

In May 1983, a secret meeting of U.S., South African, Israeli, Zairean and UNITA officials took place in Kinshasa, Zaire. Washington offered financial and military assistance to UNITA. South Africa, for its part, promised to intensify its military attacks against Angola.¹³

While concessions were not forthcoming from Angola, South Africa used linkage to block progress towards Namibia's independence. In November

1985, UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar wrote to South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha informing him that, as far as the UN was concerned, all issues regarding a Namibian settlement were resolved and that what remained was to set a date for a ceasefire between SWAPO and South African forces and to start implementing UN Security Council Resolution 435 (1978). In response, South Africa indicated that it was ready to start implementing the UN plan on 1st August 1986 if Angola agreed to withdraw Cuban troops.¹⁴ It did not. It was not until 1988 that the impasse was resolved.

Terms of the Accord

Negotiations between Angolan and U.S. officials resumed in April 1987. In August the Angolan leader, Eduardo dos Santos, presented a slightly modified version of proposals for Cuban troops withdrawal and independence for Namibia - that his country had made in November 1984. He offered a partial withdrawal of Cubans if South Africa agreed to withdraw its troops from Southern Angola; accepted to implement UN Security Council Resolution 435 (1978); and it and the United States stopped assisting UNITA.

Serious negotiations involving the two countries and Cuba started in May 1988 under US mediation. By that time Angola had accepted, in principle, to have all Cuban troops withdrawn.¹⁵ However, it insisted that the process should be phased and take four years.¹⁶ On the other hand, the South Africans and the United States wanted all Cuban troops to leave Angola in one year. In addition, they demanded that a "broadbased" government, including UNITA rebels, should be formed in Luanda.¹⁷ In the same month the South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha revealed that his country was drawing up proposals of its own. These included the demands that, by 1st June 1989, 20,000 Cuban troops should be withdrawn from Angola, and seven guerilla camps of the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa in the country should be dismantled. In return, Pretoria offered to grant independence to Namibia according to the UN plan by the same date. These proposals were rejected by both Cuba and Angola. Regarding the dismantling of ANC camps, Cuba argued that if this demand was met it would make Angola a "henchman of the aspirations of apartheid".¹⁸ ANC President Oliver Tambo argued that the removal of the bases could not be considered unless South Africa agreed to dismantle apartheid.¹⁹ This condition was basically in line with Pretoria's major regional strategic objective of getting black-ruled countries in Southern Africa, by force of arms or by diplomatic means, to stop supporting liberation movements fighting against it. It also appealed to Washington which has been trying to get the ANC to lay down its arms.

By the end of November 1988 a tentative agreement had been reached, however. Under the terms of the Brazzaville accord on peace in Angola and independence for Namibia, Angola and Cuba agreed to the above demands. Consequently 5,000 to 6,000 ANC guerrillas and refugees in Angola were destined for relocation.²⁰ Oliver Tambo explained that his movement had accepted to withdraw its fighters after consultations with the leaders of that country and others. According to him, the move was intended "to deny South Africa and her allies usage of the presence of ANC military facilities in Angola as an excuse to block the liberation process now in motion".²¹ He indicated that the ANC was aware that the agreement signed in New York constituted "an advance of great strategic significance for our region".²² The implication of the statement is that the ANC move was a tactical one.

Nevertheless it represented a major diplomatic coup for South Africa and for the United States. The Nkomati Accord which South Africa signed with Mozambique in March 1984 resulted in a similar fate for ANC cadres based there. Swaziland too has a security pact with Pretoria under the terms of which it cannot allow ANC fighters to operate from its territory. Zimbabwe and Botswana, which have not signed such agreements, have nevertheless stated that they will not allow the ANC to set up guerrilla bases on their territories.²³ An independent Namibia may simply follow the example of these countries, at least initially. One result has been that the ANC and the Pan African Congress (PAC), have not followed the pattern of fighting rural guerrilla warfare in border areas initially, as was the case in the former Portuguese colonies and Zimbabwe. Instead they have pursued urban guerrilla warfare. Of course, tactics may change with circumstances.

Thus unavailability of base facilities in countries adjoining South Africa for the use of liberation movements does not necessarily mean frustrating the armed struggle as such. As President Kaunda has observed, the dismantling of ANC bases in Angola is a minor setback. It is just that instead of moving short distances to the fighting ground, the "ANC fighters may have to move long distances from their training bases to South Africa".²⁴

No issue proved more problematic during the negotiations than that of the time table and modalities of Cuban troops withdrawal from Angola. Overtime the Angolans had shifted their negotiating position from rejecting linkage of Cuban troops withdrawal to Namibia's independence altogether, to proposing a partial withdrawal and, finally, to accepting their total withdrawal. At each stage Angola's main concern was to ensure that its security would not be seriously compromised as a result of concessions that it would make at the negotiating table. The shift from

rejecting linkage to advocating partial Cuban troops withdrawal was a tactical move designed to break the impasse in negotiations created by linkage rather than a substantive concession. The idea was to retain a residual Cuban force that was large enough to guarantee security, while creating the impression that Angola was making concessions and could therefore not be blamed for any lack of progress in the negotiations. Finally, as will become evident later, Luanda committed itself to a time table for total Cuban troops withdrawal only at a time when events on the battlefield in the Southern part of the country warranted downgrading the security threat posed by South Africa and UNITA.

Even then, the time table that was accepted by all the parties to the negotiations permitted Angola to retain a large Cuban force for a long period after Namibia's independence. Thus, it was agreed that 3,000, out of an estimated 50,000 Cuban troops ;in the country, would be pulled out by 1st April 1989, the date on which implementation of the UN plan for the independence of Namibia was scheduled to start. The remaining force of 47,000 Cubans was to gradually leave in 27 months, which is at least 20 months after Namibia's independence.²⁵ The residual force could deter South Africa from breaching the accord by starting hostilities or, in the event of such a breach, it would reinforce Angolan troops. Finally, it is also possible that the Cuban force could move into Namibia if it were to be invited by a new SWAPO government under threat, as had been the case with the MPLA government in Angola in 1975. Thus the phased withdrawal of Cuban troops, according to the time table that was agreed on (whose duration was reduced from the four years initially proposed by Angola and Cuba), was mainly intended to guarantee Angola's security more or less in the same way that their partial pull out was supposed to have done. Of course, the argument advanced by Angola and Cuba that adequate time was required to train FAPLA personnel to replace the Cubans, and to evacuate a 50,000 - strong force is valid but not exclusive.

For its part, South Africa undertook to withdraw its troops from Southern Angola where they had been since December 1986 - this was done in August 1988. It also agreed to end its illegal occupation of Namibia and to stop assisting UNITA rebels in Angola. However South Africa's withdrawal of support from the rebels might not diminish their threat to Angola's security because the US, which was acting as mediator in the negotiations, refused to cut off military assistance to them.

The U.S. - UNITA Connection

The main reason given by U.S. officials for their government's refusal to stop aiding UNITA was that the Luanda government did not want to reach a settlement with the rebel movement. The question is: Why should

Washington make it its business to continue to interfere in the Angolan war?

The fact of the matter is simply that of U.S. hostility toward the MPLA government. The U.S. expected reconciliation in Angola to pave the way for the replacement of the regime thereby a pro-Washington or "moderate" one. This is evident from the nature of the conditions for reconciliation that UNITA upholds, which are also backed by Washington. It demands formation of a broadbased *interim* government including the MPLA, UNITA and other movements, and the holding of free and fair elections thereafter.²⁶ Neither the U.S. nor UNITA expects the MPLA to win any free elections. For example, this was implied in U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Chester Crocker's assertion that UNITA leader, Jonas Savimbi, had widespread support in Angola.²⁷ Thus Washington has not abandoned the objective of overthrowing the Luanda government since the Angolan civil war of 1975/76 when it supported armies of rival movements of the MPLA, including UNITA. What have changed are the methods and tactics.

U.S. policy toward Angola was part of the Reagan administration's global strategy which has been inherited by the Bush Administration. Reagan's crusade against communism involved supporting armed rebel movements against third World regimes considered to be pro-Moscow. Examples are, the Contras in Nicaragua, the Mujaheddin in Afghanistan and, of course, UNITA in Angola.

There has been no fundamental shift in U.S. policy in this respect, even with the improvement in superpower relations in the Gorbachev era. Moscow has been following a policy of seeking political solutions to Third World conflicts where the superpowers are involved. Thus it signed the Geneva accord in May 1988 leading to the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan where they had been helping the regime to fight rebels supported by the U.S. and Pakistan since 1979. The Soviet Union was also instrumental in pushing for a negotiated solution to the Angolan civil war and to the Namibian problem. However, the U.S. has not responded in good faith to Soviet moves in these two cases. It has perceived Soviet troops withdrawal from Afghanistan, and Cuban troops pull out from Angola as strategic retreats by Moscow that it should exploit to its advantage. Therefore it has continued to support UNITA and the Mujaheddin after peace agreement of which it is a co-guarantor had been reached.

Viewed in this perspective, the linkage policy of the U.S. was intended to weaken the MPLA government *vis a vis* UNITA by denying it Cuban military support. This, in turn, was supposed to force Luanda to make concessions to the rebels at the negotiating table or, failure to that, it

would have to face them on the battlefield in a weaker position than was before. Either way, the U.S. expected the end result to be replacement of the MPLA government which it considered to be marxist and pro-Moscow. Therefore, from its point of view, Cuban troops presence in Angola was not an obstacle to recognition of the Angolan government. Rather, it was a barrier to the creation of a government that it could recognise.

Factors Leading To The Accord

Improvement in Superpower Relations

When Ronald Reagan became President of the United States in 1981, he pledged to make America "strong again". His approach to relations with the Soviet Union was based on the principle of "peace through strength". This posture led to unprecedented expenditure on defence. It also retarded progress in disarmament talks between the two countries, and contributed to intensification of the cold war.

This situation changed markedly during the U.S. President's second term of office, which also coincided with the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. The two leaders held summit meetings in Geneva in 1985 and in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1986. After six years of negotiations the two superpowers finally agreed to scrap intermediate-range nuclear weapons and signed the INF treaty in Washington in December, 1987.

This success was partly a result of attempts by the two countries to grapple with pressing economic problems at home. High defence spending necessitated by the policy of seeking peace through strength led to hefty budget deficits in the U.S. to compound the problems, the strength of the dollar favoured imports thereby hurting local industries and causing trade deficits. Consequently protectionist pressures were generated. Washington found itself in conflict with its traditional Western allies and trading partners, especially Japan, over trading policy.²⁸ Therefore, from the point of view of the United States, disarmament and a general improvement defence expenditure and thereby help resolve related economic problems. It would also help to relieve West European governments of pressure from peace campaigners.

After Mikhail Gorbachev assumed power he pledged to undertake a fundamental restructuring of the economy and society of the Soviet Union. His economic reform policy (*perestroika*), was intended to invigorate the economy and thereby reverse years of stagnation, especially in agriculture. Therefore, from the point of view of the Soviet Union, disarmament, and global peace in general, would create conditions for reducing or slowing

down defence expenditure. This, in turn, would release funds for the economic transformation effort.

Regional conflicts also featured on the agenda of superpower talks. The Reagan administration wanted Moscow to help resolve Third World conflicts in which it was involved directly or by proxy; like those in Angola; Kampuchea; Afghanistan; and Nicaragua; as a condition for progress toward improving superpower relations.²⁹ Angola and Namibia were discussed at the Reagan and Gorbachev summit of May 1988 in Moscow. September 29, 1988 was fixed by the two leaders as the deadline for resolving the two countries' problems.³⁰ At the same time Soviet leaders were reviewing their country's policies toward regional conflicts. During the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU); Gorbachev introduced the idea of seeking political settlements for regional conflicts. This meant that the role of armed conflict would be downgraded; creating opportunities for savings on Soviet military assistance to the Third World; and for rapprochement with the United States.

The conclusion of the Brazzaville accord must be viewed against the background of these changes in superpower politics. Both the conflict in Angola and the Namibian independence problem had been transformed into cold war issues. The U.S. policies of linkage and constructive engagement; explained earlier; were conceived with the object of containing the Soviet menace in Southern Africa in view. Washington's perception of this menace was bound to change accordingly with improved super-power relations and changes in Soviet strategy. In addition, President Reagan was disposed towards scoring foreign policy successes in his last term of office to demonstrate to critics that his policy of seeking peace through strength worked, and to help his Vice-President George Bush to succeed him after the next Presidential elections.

For his part, Gorbachev was seeking to cultivate an image of the Soviet Union as a peace-loving superpower, and not the over-armed and belligerent one that the Reagan administration had portrayed. He also wanted to contribute to the creation of conditions that would make high Soviet military expenditures unnecessary. Moscow therefore encouraged President Dos Santos of Angola to be more receptive to the idea of a political settlement for his country and for Namibia. These conditions helped to create the impetus toward a negotiated settlement. However they were not the only ones.

Pressure on South Africa

Spence described South Africa's predicament correctly when he observed that

The continuing impact of the black opposition, the seeming irrelevance of the government's reform strategy and the sudden rise in the level of external pressure illustrate very clearly how in the short space of 18 months South Africa's domestic and international position has changed for the worse.³¹

Regarding the internal security situation, South Africa was undoubtedly "a society at war with itself,"³² and has remained that way since then. Unprecedented black unrest erupted in the townships in mid-1984, and simply developed into more or less a permanent feature of the way of life. The government responded by deploying troops, and by declaring a state of emergency in July 1985. By 1986 over 1,500 people had been killed, most of them blacks.³³

Intensified repression on the part of the South African government provided anti-apartheid organizations and individuals throughout the world with a good case for putting pressure on their governments to impose sanctions against Pretoria. As a result of the drastically changed circumstances, even the major Western countries that traditionally opposed such measures finally imposed selective sanctions against South Africa.³⁴

The unrest in the black townships created another problem for Pretoria. It already had an estimated 100,000 troops in occupied Namibia where they were battling SWAPO guerrillas; and from which they periodically invaded southern Angola.³⁵ According to SWAPO sources; by 1984 the Namibia border war had become one of the most expensive wars in Africa; forcing Pretoria to spend an average of US\$1 billion per year.³⁶ Therefore the opening of the "home front" in 1984; which the uprising amounted to; simply meant that South Africa's defence forces and resources were getting overextended.

In addition; the business environment in South Africa changed for worse. Historically the country had been considered politically stable; with a cheap and docile local and migrant labour force - just the kind of environment that is conducive to achieving high rates of return investment. The unrest altered this picture. Political risk in South Africa is now rated high. This; combined with pressure from anti-apartheid lobbyists at home; has forced a number of multinational firms to pull out. In 1984 there were only seven withdrawals; 39 in 1985; rising to 53 in 1986.³⁷

All this made Pretoria realise that its economy was destined to come under increasing strain which would make it difficult to continue wars of destabilization in neighbouring countries; and its illegal occupation of Namibia; and contain popular black unrest within its borders.

Military developments, in terms of strategic balance; were not encouraging either. South African strategists had long considered their country's continued occupation of Namibia to be dependent on the ability of the armed forces to prevail in the war in Southern Angola where they attacked SWAPO bases and helped UNITA in its war against the MPLA government. In the course of the 1987/88 hostilities on this front; Pretoria's military might effectively neutralized and the military balance began to tilt against it. Its troops had intervened to save UNITA from imminent defeat after Angola committed 18,000 to 25,000 of its troops to a major drive against the rebels' strongholds in mid-1987, beginning with the town of Mavinga.³⁸ Although the South Africans managed to halt the advance, nevertheless their failure over a period of several months to capture the strategic town of Cuito Cuanavale where the Angolan forces retreated clearly indicated that the military balance was no longer on their side. This was confirmed by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).³⁹

In fact the turning point had been reached several years before when "Operation Askari", which lasted from December 1983 to February 1984, failed to achieve its objective of extending the territory occupied by the South Africans and UNITA since 1981, due to stiff resistance by Angolan forces.⁴⁰ However, they still retained air superiority until the 1987 invasion of Angola when the South African Air Force suffered unprecedented heavy losses in the process of forcing Angolan troops to retreat and attempting to capture Cuito Cuanavale. For example, over a three-month period 40 of its combat aircraft were downed.⁴¹ Angolan MiG fighter planes were able to "buzz" South African military positions in Northern Namibia after ground troops, assisted by fresh Cuban reinforcements, advanced close to the Namibian border and new air strips were constructed there.⁴²

The implications of South Africa's loss of strategic superiority for a negotiated settlement were clearly understood by President Kaunda of Zambia who argued that:

for the first time the apartheid regime had met defeat at the hands of an African army - the Angolan forces - and the movement of Cuban troops towards the Southern borders posed more danger to it. It was clear that the Boers were anxious to see that the Cubans did not delve deeper into this background South

Although the system of apartheid is yet to be "shed", Namibia has been set free.

Conclusions

The United States, together with Britain, West Germany, France and Canada formed the Western Contact Group in 1977 with the objective of helping to bring about an internationally acceptable settlement of the Namibian independence problem. However, the group did not actually act as a neutral intermediary. On the contrary its members sought to influence the course of negotiations so that it could lead to a solution on terms favourable to the interests of the West. This in effect meant that the Namibian problem was transformed from a multilateral (UN) one into an issue of East-West competition. In the process the Contact Group took over initiative from the United Nations in the search for a negotiated settlement. It also opposed economic sanctions, and other forms of pressure, as a way of compelling South Africa to pull out from Namibia out of fear that such measures would undermine the economic interests of the West in that country. Perceiving the weakness in this approach, Pretoria, which did not want a "pro-communist" SWAPO government in Namibia that an internationally acceptable settlement was expected to lead to, employed delaying tactics in the negotiations.

However, by the end of 1980, a settlement on the terms of UN Security Council Resolution 435 (1978) that the Contact Group had helped to create was in sight. The Reagan administration which assumed power in the U.S. in January 1981 contributed to further delays in reaching a settlement by proposing modifications to the resolution and by insisting that Cuban Troop withdrawal from Angola should be a condition for the independence of Namibia. South Africa also manipulated these new elements in the negotiating process to block a settlement. In fact, both Washington and Pretoria cooperated in their fight against what they perceived to be the "communist threat" in Southern Africa. This was facilitated by the U.S. policy of constructive engagement. The threat manifested itself in "radical" regimes, like that in Angola, and in liberation movements, like SWAPO and ANC (SA) which had to be undermined.

While the U.S. succeeded in winning the cooperation of South Africa on "linkage", nevertheless this policy was responsible for the collapse of the Contact Group in 1983 after all the members, except the U.S. itself, voted for UN Security Council Resolution 439 which condemned the policy. However Washington was so determined that it continued the initiative to

virtually alone.

By the mid-1980s, however, the U.S. and its Western allies were forced by international pressure and by public opinion at home to impose limited economic sanctions against South Africa. This development undermined the policy of constructive engagement and drove a wedge through the Washington-Pretoria axis. At the same time the costs to South Africa of maintaining law and order at home in the wake of a major black revolt, of occupying Namibia and waging war against SWAPO and Angolan forces were escalating. Its military pressure against Angola, supported by the U.S., did not succeed in compelling the MPLA government to pull out Cuban troops and to share power with UNITA. Instead Luanda reacted to the security threat by seeking, and obtaining assistance from Cuba and the Soviet Union. As a result Cuban troops strength in Angola reached a record of 50,000 figure, and the military balance in the war in the southern part of the country tilted against South Africa. Under the changed circumstances Angola could afford to accept Cuban troops withdrawal from its territory since its security was not likely to be seriously compromised. Similarly *rapprochement* between the superpowers created conditions that also favoured resolution of the Namibian and Angolan problems which had become entangled in superpower rivalry.

Concern that South Africa might not adhere to accords reached made Angola cautious such that it insisted on retaining a residual Cuban force up to a period beyond Namibia's possible time of independence. Luanda could not accept sharing power with UNITA, which was Washington's condition for dropping its support for the rebels, so the problem of the civil war remained unresolved. Consequently, the Brazzaville accord on peace in Angola and independence for Namibia, may give Namibians the independence they have waited for so long, but Angola may have to wait for peace for some time although its security might have improved.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Sunday Times of Zambia*, 18 December 1988, p. 1.
2. Cuban troops had been invited to Angola in November 1975 by the MPLA government soon after Angola's Independence to help it to fight rival movements, and South African troops who had invaded the country.
3. Andre du Pisani, "SWA/ Namibia Update: 1981 to April 1984", *Africa Insight*, V. 14, No. 3 (1984), p. 178.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
5. Michael Clough, "From South West Africa to Namibia", in Michel Clough, ed., *Changing Realities in Southern Africa: Implications for American Policy*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), P. 75.
6. Du Pisani, *ibid.*, p. 178.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 181/182.
9. *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social and Cultural Series*. (ARB: PSCS), V. 21, No.5 (15 June 1984) , p. 7236.
10. United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN), *Namibia: A Direct United Nations Responsibility* (Lusaka: UNIN, 1987) p. 224.
11. *SWAPO Information Bulletin*, April 1985, p. 4.
12. *Africa Report*, V. 32, No. 3 (May - June 1987), p. 5.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Keesings Contemporary Archives*, V. 33, No. 5 (May 1985), p. 35106 A.
15. *New African*, No. 44 (January 1988), p. 18.
16. Dos Santos at a press conference in Brazzaville. *Times of Zambia*, 5 October 1988, p. 1.
17. *Ibid.*, 12 May 1988, p. 6.
18. Cited in *Zambia Daily Mail*, 4 August 1988, p. 1.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Keith Somerville, "Where Does ANC Go Now?" *ibid.*, 4 February 1989, p. 4.
21. *Times of Zambia*, 9 January 1989, p. 1.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Keith Somerville, *ibid.*
24. Cited in *Times of Zambia*, 11 January 1989, p. 1.
25. *Ibid.*, 6 January 1989. Under the UN plan, the seven month transition period started on 1 April 1989.
26. *Zambia Daily Mail*, 9 September 1988, p. 1.
27. *Ibid.*, 20 December 1988, p. 1.
28. See, for example, *The Economist*, 2-8 March 1985, pp. 65-66, and the 19-25 September 1987 Issue, pp. 72-73.
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32. James Barber, "South Africa: A Society at War with Itself", *The World Today*, V. 41, No. 7 (July 1985) pp. 129-132.
33. Philip Van Niekerk, "South Africa: The Grapes of Wrath", *New African*, No.224 (May 1986), pp. 8-9.
34. Details about of the sanctions can be found in Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), *Quarterly Economic Review: South Africa*, No. 4 (1985), pp. 10-11; and in *South*, No. 75 (January 1987), pp. 32-33.
35. The 100,000 troops include personnel of the SWATF.
36. *Namibia Combatant*, v. 6, No. 7 (February 1985), p. 8, and *SWAPO Information Bulletin* (December 1984), p. 6.
37. EIU, *Country Report: South Africa*, No. 1 (1987), p. 17.
38. Alan Rake, "Savimbi Wins Round 13", *New African*, No. 244 (January 1988), p. 16; *Africa Research Bulletin: Political Series*, No. 4 (15 May 1988), p. 88 32.
39. " *Military Balance*", cited in *Times of Zambia*, 20 October 1988, p. 1.
40. Heribert Adam and Stanley Uys, *CSIS Africa Notes*, No. 39 (February 1985), p. 4.
41. *Southern Africa*, V. 1, No. 8 (May 1988), P. 20.
42. John Marcum "Angola: The Present Opportunity", *Issue*, v. 17, No. 1, (Winter 1988), p. 17; According to the Cuban Leader Fidel Castro a second. 3,500-metre long jungle air strip near the Namibian border was completed in July 1988, *Times of Zambia*, 28 July 1988, p. 1.
43. *Times of Zambia*, 19 May 1988, p. 1.