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Analysis of multiparty mediation processes

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Citation

Vuković, S. (2013, February 22). *Analysis of multiparty mediation processes*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/20551>

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Title: Analysis of multiparty mediation processes

Issue Date: 2013-02-22



CHAPTER
V

NAMIBIA

CHAPTER V: Namibia

A much different case of multiparty mediation occurred throughout the 1980s in Southern Africa. The peace settlement signed on December 22, 1988 at the UN headquarters in New York, by officials representing Angola, Cuba and South Africa, which granted Namibia with a long awaited independence, represented a successful conclusion of an eight years long US lead diplomatic endeavor that saw engaged a multitude of international actors. Intricate dynamics of the Cold War era coupled with regional problems dating back to the League of Nations, were enough reasons for the US to understand that acting alone was not enough, and that its mediatory clout, even as a superpower was finite (Crocker 1999, 229). In order to guide all parties involved in the regional imbroglio toward a settlement they needed a much larger diplomatic involvement of various global and regional players.

Looking back, it appears quite clear that the peacemaking process could not succeed without valuable diplomatic inputs provided by members of the Western Contact Group (the United Kingdom, France, West Germany and Canada), frontline states (Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Botswana) and UN and its suborganizations (Iji 2011). According to Crocker, “the multiparty character of the mediation was designed to neutralize the obstruction of competing parties and states, and add reach, credibility, and access to international and regional efforts” (Crocker 1999, 207). However, the most significant contribution to the US mediation initiative came from their fiercest Cold War rivals in Moscow. In fact it was the rapprochement between the USSR and the US that broke the deadlock in the negotiation process (Berridge 1989, Wood 1993, Pycroft 1994). When the Soviet Union radically altered its policy objectives and “abandoned reflexive obstructionism” in order to “do creative things together” (Crocker 1999, 239), the peace process managed to overcome Cold War constraints and produce a settlement for a longstanding problem in Southern Africa.

The rapprochement between the US and the USSR was of crucial importance. It allowed for an US-led mediation (primarily conducted by Chester Crocker who at that time was the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs) to achieve the necessary level of legitimacy, and consequently produce success through a well coordinated peace process. Thus, despite the fact the US acted as a biased mediator with

a specific set of interest it aimed to promote in the peace process, its role was acceptable to both the disputants and the other powerful state (USSR) (Berridge 1989, 469).

Therefore, the case of Namibia provides a unique opportunity to observe a case where the outcome was dependent on the interests of global powers and global geo-political conditions. At the same time, the case will also show how intrinsic dynamics of warfare induced multiple mediators and actors on the ground to achieve the necessary level of convergence of interests, and consequently through a peace process coordinated by a powerful state produce a mutually acceptable solution to the conflict.

5.1 The Nature of Conflict

5.1.1 Sources of Intractability

The territory of present-day Namibia was occupied by Germany after the Berlin congress in 1878 and remained in its possession until the end of the Great War when the League of Nations decided to confer it to South Africa as a 'class C' mandate which stayed for administering the territory as an integral part of the governing state (Zartman 1989, 174). After a series of events in the post-World War II period and a growing global decolonization pressure, in 1968 the UN changed the name of the territory of Southwest Africa to Namibia. Soon after, in 1971, following several appeals and rulings in favor of South Africa, the International Court of Justice ruled South Africa's presence there illegal (Crocker 1999, 207). However the real challenge to the South African presence in Namibia was created after a sudden Portuguese withdrawal from the region in 1975 leaving Angola completely vulnerable to a consequent Soviet-backed Cuban intervention. The link with the events unfolding in neighboring Angola will prove to be of crucial importance for the subsequent mediation process, as both aspects - the power vacuum in Angola and Namibia's claim for independence - would eventually be linked and managed jointly by international actors.

5.1.2 Development of Deep Feelings of Distrust, Mutual Hatred and Irreconcilable Positions

During the wave of decolonization after the Second World War, on the territories of present day Angola and Namibia, several groups formed with national liberation as their main goal. Each one embodied a particular societal mark, and was inclined to promote a specific socio-political agenda.

During the German colonial rule the Herero community of central Namibia and Nama from the south were subjected to brutal exploitation and genocide (Olusoga and Erichsen 2010). Already from the 1920s, when the territory was transferred to a South African administration (at that time a British dominion), the ideal of an independent Namibia started to emerge. In fact, a few thousand Hereros managed to escape the German “extermination order” of 1904, finding exile in present-day Botswana (Vigne 1987, 87.). According to Vigne, “it was through the efforts of exiles that Namibians themselves were able to bring the issue of Namibia to the attention of the UN, despite the virtual imprisonment of the majority of their own country, and the exile of many more” (Vigne 1987, 87). The growing sense of Namibian nationhood was further strengthened in the midst of the global wave of decolonization resulting in a strong resistance to South African rule. Colonial hardship was further aggravated with the introduction of apartheid policies in 1948. During the 1950s several political movements emerged, such as South West Africa’s People Organization (SWAPO) - an inexperienced, populist and non-aligned movement - and the South West African National Union (SWANU) - a sophisticated, perhaps elitist and Peking oriented (Vigne 1987, 88). The turning point happened in 1964, when the newly formed Organization of African Union (OAU) put forward a direct question to both movements about their readiness to take up arms against the South African occupation. SWAPO’s ‘yes’ led to its recognition, while SWANU’s refusal to accept the prospects of armed struggle meant the withdrawal of OAU support (Vigne 1987, 88). As a result SWAPO emerged as the “sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people” in the eyes of the UN (A/RES/3111, 1973; A/RES/31/146, 1976).

As many African countries, from its onset Angola represented a conglomerate of different peoples and groups, each with its distinct history

and traditions (Meijer and Birmingham 2004, 10). Their shared experience mainly started with the Portuguese colonial expansion in the region. Under the colonial regime the Angolan society experienced highly discriminatory legislation, which “separated the indigenous population from a tiny elite of ‘civilized’ individuals (or *assimilados*) who enjoyed some of the rights of Portuguese citizens” (Meijer and Birmingham 2004, 11). Such racial and discriminatory politics unquestionably left an important mark on the future societal dynamics in Angola. Social cleavages that were generated by the colonial rule conditioned the future relationships between different social groups which were characterized by high levels of mistrust and suspicion.

While in Namibia SWAPO was able to assume the role of a “sole and authentic representative” of the people, which was able to challenge the South African rule, in Angola things were quite different. The territory was affected by an unbroken rivalry between various elites. Over time three very strong groupings emerged, all promoting the idea of national liberation. The National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), led by Holden Roberto, was initially the strongest one, reflecting the aspirations of the elites from the north, primarily from the hinterland of Kinshasa, while still maintaining some cultural links with the old Kongo kingdom (Meijer and Birmingham 2004, 12).

The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), emerged from the territory populated by the Mbundu people from the surroundings of Luanda, but it also included several urban communities of both indigenous and mixed-race descent. Finally, the Union of Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) led by Jonas Savimbi, promoted the economic interests of the Ovimbundu people and their merchant leaders from the southern *planalto* (Meijer and Birmingham 2004, 12). However, according to Meijer and Birmingham, “to a large extent the ethnic identification of these movements has come about as a result of conscious political maneuvering by each leadership rather than as a genuine expression of popular sentiment and aspiration” (Meijer and Birmingham 2004, 12). Promotion of particular interests was only aggravated with the power vacuum left after the end of Portuguese colonial rule, as each movement aspired to establish power over the entire country.

5.1.3 Internal Characteristics of the Conflicting Sides and Employment of Repressive Measures

The anti-colonial struggle in Angola started in the early 1960s and was characterized by the methods of guerilla warfare. Since none of the armed movements was able to considerably challenge the colonial rule, they tried to outmaneuver each other on the political and diplomatic level. For this reason the nationalist movements were very eager to attain the necessary support from abroad. The FNLA managed to secure the backing of some of the African countries, the US and China, and in 1962 established a Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile (GRAE) which was initially recognized by OUA as a legitimate representative of Angola and a successor of the colonial rule (Meijer and Birmingham 2004, 13). However, despite being militarily much weaker, by 1975 the MPLA managed to outmaneuver FNLA diplomatically and shift the OUA support to its favor.

Both movements suffered strongly from internal fractionalization. Especially vulnerable in this regards was FNLA, whose government in exile suffered a serious hit in 1964 when Jonas Savimbi - a Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time - accused FNLA of being militarily ineffective, dependent of the US and affected by nepotism and authoritarian leadership of Holden Roberto (Meijer and Birmingham 2004, 13). He went on to visit a number of states - interestingly enough mainly communist ones - looking for support. In 1966 he established UNITA. Meijer and Birmingham point out that "by exploiting the feelings of exclusion in Angola's largest ethnic group, the Ovimbundu, Savimbi built up his own constituency in the centre and south of the country" (idem).

The first Angolan war - which was part of a greater Portuguese colonial war - was brought to an end in 1974, not because of the effectiveness of anti-colonial movements, but due to a growing pressure and dissatisfaction of the public opinion in Portugal. In fact, the process of decolonization was a direct result of the April 1974 military coup which overthrew the Salazar-Caetano regime in Portugal. As the Portuguese power grip over Angola was decreasing, sporadic violence broke out across the country. During the turmoil the armies of MPLA, FNLA and UNTA jointly patrolled the country with the aim of preserving peace (Meijer and Birmingham 2004). In January 1975, thanks to a

strong international pressure, the Portuguese authorities and the three movements signed the Alvor Accords which prescribed the establishment of a transitional government, a new constitution, elections and independence for Angola. The accords however soon collapsed, creating a pretext for the power struggle between three factions.

At the same time, although in exile, SWAPO was challenging the South African rule in Namibia. Over time the movement opened offices in several cities across Africa, eventually opening one at the UN. Although very active on the diplomatic front, SWAPO received the necessary 'push' to resort to violence only with the rulings of the International Court of Justice over the issue of Namibia's independence. The Court started deliberating on the issue due to South African's refusal to transfer the territory over to an UN Trusteeship Council. Ethiopia and Liberia that had asked for a "contentious judgment" of South West Africa, in 1966 received a favorable advisory opinion from the Court. However, this only caused further complications, as months later the Court reversed its earlier opinion stating that the two countries had "*no locus standi*" and that the case was inadmissible (Vigne 1987, 89). Although, numerous international partners were persuading SWAPO to resort to legal means and use the UN system to gain the necessary support for independence, at that moment it was clear that SWAPO could secure independence only through fighting (Vigne 1987, 90).

On July 18, 1966, the same day the ICJ reversed its earlier opinion, SWAPO declared its intention to start a military campaign against South Africa. The movement was already preparing for this move, and in August 1966 the first units entered northern Namibia (Vigne 1987, 90). The movement was poorly equipped and undertrained to confront the South African forces. Nevertheless, they were resolute in their aims. In the midst of the early military campaign, SWAPO still tried to rally international support. The reversed decision of the ICJ, which South Africa proclaimed as its victory, motivated the members of the UN General Assembly to pass Resolution 2145 and terminate the present Mandate which was conferred by the League of Nations, as South Africa had failed to fulfill its obligations from the mandate it no longer has the right to administer the territory, and that henceforth South West Africa would come under the direct responsibility of the UN (A/RES/2145, 1966). Bypassing the Security Council, the General Assembly also established a 'de jure' government of the territory with a

Commissioner as its executive, and renamed the territory to Namibia (Vigne 1987, 92). This decision was strongly objected by South African trading partners from the West.

It was an unwritten rule during the Cold War that each liberation movement in Africa gets associated with a specific ideological camp (or similar). Despite often being labeled as a member of the “Casablanca Group” - which included the African National Congress (ANC), Liberation Congress of Mozambique (FRELIMO), MPLA and Zimbabwe’s African People’s Union (ZAPU) - SWAPO tried to establish a distinctive and non-aligned position. According to Vigne there were two reasons for this: first of all, due to a long history of oppression and genocide, the Namibians “felt themselves as yet ill-equipped to serve as equal partners with the imperial powers of East and West”; secondly, while rejected by the US and UK, SWAPO was very hesitant to accept the authority of the USSR (Vigne 1987, 92). SWAPO’s initial choice of assuming a non-aligned stand was aimed at preserving internal unity - something that other liberation movements could only aspire to. Nevertheless, in the midst of Cold War super-power rivalry, SWAPO’s struggle against US’ allies in South Africa, gave enough reason for the Soviets to support its cause. Over time, SWAPO’s ties with the Soviets improved and strengthened, which made them highly unpopular with the US and its western allies.

While unable to garner international support from the powerful Western states, matters turned to SWAPO’s favor with another ICJ ruling. In 1975, the ICJ passed a new Advisory Opinion, this time stating that the continued presence of South Africa in Namibia was illegal. It called the UN member states to recognize the illegality of South African presence and refrain from any acts that could imply the legality of its administration in Namibia. At the same time South Africa was obliged to withdraw its administration from Namibia (ICJ 1975). Despite objections from some western states, the illegality of South African rule in Namibia was clearly established.

The events in neighboring Angola, where the Portuguese were agreeing on a transfer of power and accepting the independence of its former colony, inspired SWAPO to continue its struggle against the South African regime. However, the situation in Angola soon became more complicated. Following the collapse of the Alvor Accords, the power struggle between three main factions became extremely violent.

Thanks to an external support from the Soviet block, on 11 November 1975, the MPLA declared Angola's independence and installed Agostinho Neto as its first President (Meijer and Birmingham 2004, 10; Pycroft 1994, 242). The FNLA and UNITA were excluded from the newly established government, which in fact was a socialist one-party regime. Gradually the new system, which was organized along the Marxist-Leninist lines, received international recognition, however not from the US (Meijer and Birmingham 2004, 13).

By the end of the 1970s FNLA followers were integrated into the system, thanks to a rapprochement between the MPLA and Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko, who was very close to FNLA's leader Holden Roberto. The FNLA army, which at one point represented a foreign-armed force with thousands of recruits, "disintegrated without being formally disarmed or demobilized" (Meijer and Birmingham 2004, 15). This left UNITA as the main contender for power in Angola. With the collapse of the Alvor Accords, UNITA started receiving support from South Africa, at first in a clandestine form. By 1983, the partnership with UNITA became an official policy of the government in Pretoria (Accords 2004, 82). At the same time, the fact that UNITA was fighting a Marxist-Leninist regime was enough reason for the US to directly support the movement.

The turmoil that followed saw a simultaneous unfolding of three different armed conflicts. The first one was the bush war along the Namibian border with Angola between the South African Defense Force (SADF) and the SWAPO. The second and third conflict saw the SADF involved in the Angolan civil war, where it assisted the UNITA fight the MPLA, which enjoyed Cuba's unequivocal support. The US mediation efforts tackled the problem of mainly resolving conflicts involving South African and Cuban military presence both in Namibia and Angola and concentrated on a settlement that would see withdrawal of foreign forces from both countries. By then, as far the Angolan civil war was concerned, "no external party had the standing or legitimacy to force it mediation on the Angolan parties, still less to create yet another linkage of the external to the internal Angolan issues" (Crocker 1999, 224).

As the conflict in Vietnam was approaching an end, Angola and Namibia became a fertile ground for another super-power proxy war. In fact, as Pycroft notes "the influence of super-power rivalry became

one the defining characteristics of southern African regional politics” (Pycroft 1994, 242). According to Meijer and Birmingham, “each side was not so much defending a specific interest in Angola as playing out geo-political rivalry” (Meijer and Birmingham 2004, 15).

5.2 Involvement of International Actors and Their Interests in the Conflict

The unfolding situation in the region gave enough reason for the Soviet Union to advance its ambition of implementing the ‘Brezhnev Doctrine’ in southern Africa. Under that doctrine, the détente and peaceful coexistence with the ‘imperialist camp’ were a result of a favorable shift in balance of power and as a form of struggle between the two systems. For Moscow the agreements between the two global powers were a reflection of the Soviet success in the “diplomatic struggle of the two worlds” (Mitchell 1978, 381). Brezhnev even stated that “détente by no means annuls the battle of ideas” (Brezhnev cited in Mitchell 1987, 381). According to Mitchell, under the Brezhnev doctrine “the Soviet support for national liberation movements, particularly in southern Africa, is presumably based upon the assumption that the general crisis of capitalism makes the West more vulnerable to pressure” (Mitchell 1978, 381). In other words, the success of the liberation movements was perceived as a means to an end, which was the increasing weight of the socialist system in world politics (*idem*).

Following the rationale of the Brezhnev doctrine, the Soviets used the turmoil and instability that emerged during the collapse of the Portuguese colonial rule in Angola, in order to advance their role on the global level. Pycroft noted that “the victory of the Soviet-backed MPLA over the South African and United States assisted UNITA and FNLA forces in the first round of the Angolan civil war in 1975 and 1976 provided the Soviet Union with a foothold in southern Africa, which it improved through support for the MPLA in Angola, SWAPO in Namibia, the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, and Frelimo after independence in Mozambique” (Pycroft 1994, 242). The Soviet (and Cuban) support for the MPLA started already in the 1960s, but was initially quite insufficient to allow the MPLA to challenge the Portuguese colonial rule. Over time the Soviet support become

fundamental for the MPLA's cause. The heavy armaments that were provided to the movement in the most delicate moments of the civil war in 1975 were of crucial importance for MPLA's success in obtaining control of the capital and declaring Angola an independent country. In 1976, the USSR established even closer relations with the MPLA by signing the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (Meijer 2004, 86). At its first congress in December 1977, the movement transformed itself into a Marxist-Leninist party signaling its unquestioned affiliation with the Soviet block.

Cuba was another close ally of the MPLA. Cuban interest in the region started with Che Guevarra's visit to Central Africa in 1964. During the 1975 civil war, Cuba assisted the MPLA, by first sending military advisors, and eventually dispatching troops in response to South African intervention in support of UNITA. By February 1976, Cuba had dispatched around 14,000 troops to support the MPLA, with a clear intention of consolidating Soviet influence in the region (Accords 2004, 87). After the independence of Angola, Cuba continued to provide the much needed military support but it also assisted the government in rebuilding the country by providing it with engineers, teachers, doctors, and civil servants (idem).

American interests to intervene in the conflict were also primarily political and evolved around the 'Reagan Doctrine'. The doctrine had anti-communism as its *raison d'être* and promoted the idea of supporting anti-communist resistance around the world (Oye et al. 1987). Thus, not surprisingly during the Angolan civil war in 1975 and 1976 the US assisted the anti-communist movements. In principle, in southern Africa the Reagan administration tried to promote the policies of 'constructive engagement' - which were introduced by Assistant Secretary Chester Crocker in 1981 - with the primary aim of countering the Soviet presence in the region (Crocker 1992; Davies 2007). Under this policy, "any leader that was opposed to Soviet ideology and expansion was courted by America" (Pycroft 1994, 243). The US found a close ally in South Africa's Prime Minister P.W. Botha (who would later become the President), who was engaged in a struggle with a Soviet-backed SWAPO in Namibia. The policies of constructive engagement for the South Africa government had a dual impact: on the one side it was an opportunity for South Africa to regain the lost western support, and on the other it offered a cloud of legitimacy for the government's disruptive

actions both domestically and in the region.

According to Pycroft, “for Angola, the most significant component of constructive engagement was the US’s introduction, in 1982, of ‘linkage’ into negotiation for Namibia’s independence” (Pycroft 1994, 243). In a nutshell, the linkage meant that an independent Namibia could not be achieved without the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, thus tying together the faith of two countries. In principle, the US was interested in achieving a smooth, peaceful and stable transition from colonial rule to self-government (Zartman 1989, 182). The main dilemma the US had was to choose between a continued apartheid South African sovereignty over Namibia, strongly opposed by the international community, or an UN endorsed independence for the territory, which would most likely also entail a pro-Marxist SWAPO government in Namibia. By the mid-1970s, as South African policies became incompatible with principles cherished by the US administration, policy makers in Washington realized that any further resistance to Namibian nationalism, which had the UN backing, would only backfire on the long run. Thus the key concern of the US was to prevent a war from escalating even more. The US feared that any further intensification of fighting would only draw in their Soviet rivals into the conflict, making it necessary for the US to align with apartheid South Africa, a scenario they absolutely wanted to avoid.

With the help of partner western states in the Security Council – France, the United Kingdom, Canada and West Germany – in September 1978 the US managed to pass UN Security Council Resolution 345 that prescribed a “set of complex arrangements for the territory’s transition to independence under South African administrative control with simultaneous UN monitoring and supervision” (Crocker 1999, 214). Once the framework for upcoming peacemaking activities was set up, in 1981 the new Reagan administration took on the task to reestablish “coordinated working relations among the Western Five” or the Western Contact Group, whose global leverage and reputation would become useful for the upcoming peace making efforts (Zartman 1989; Iji 2011).

South Africa was very skeptical about intentions of the US and its allies in Southern Africa, given the apparent UN advocacy for Namibia’s independence and a growing support for SWAPO on the East River. However what mostly affected Pretoria’s uneasiness was a lack of reacti-

on by the US and its allies to the Soviet-Cuban intervention in Angola. Until then, the West hesitated to include the Angola question into the peacemaking equation of Namibia's final status. It was deemed as rather dangerous to address the issue of Cuban presence in Angola, and consequently lose Angola's assistance in Namibia negotiations, as it was feared that the rest of the international community might see this as western countries' prioritization of the communist question over the one of decolonization in Africa. From a practical angle, the West was aware that addressing the Cuban presence in Angola would necessarily provoke Moscow to react, at least on a diplomatic level.

However, despite these concerns, it became quite clear to the new US administration (under President George H. W. Bush) that perpetuating this logic would only keep the peace process in deadlock, as South Africa made it quite clear that its cooperation in the process directly depended on the extent of Cuban presence in the region. Even Angolan leaders recognized the connection between Namibian and Angolan events when they stated that "Cubans could leave Angola *after* Namibia's independence under Resolution 435" (Crocker 1999, 216). So the US chose to risk and decided to restructure negotiations in order to include the Angolan factor as well. According to Crocker the 'linkage strategy' had two advantages: "a far better chance to nail Pretoria down to a firm commitment on Resolution 435 and an appropriate US response to Soviet extension of the Brezhnev doctrine to the Third World, including Africa" (Crocker 1999, 216). The US hoped that a well coordinated mediation effort, which put diplomatic pressure on the Soviet-Cuban-Angolan group, would weaken the current Soviet martial policies in Africa. Therefore, as hypothesized in H1 and H11c, while the stage for mediation was set, the US still needed some type of compliance, even tacit, from the Soviets. In other words, potential success of mediation efforts was directly related to the ability of the Soviets to use their bias position in order to leverage their partners in conflict to change strategies and opt for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. At the same time, the willingness to leverage both Cubans and Angolans toward an agreement would indicate that the US and the USSR have managed to establish a common idea of resolving the conflict through mediation and thus indicate Soviet willingness to participate in US led and coordinated mediation activities.

In reality, Moscow had quite limited interests in Namibia, or as Za-

rtman puts it, “no interests to lose or defend and everything to gain” (Zartman 1989, 183). Its involvement in the conflict was incomparable to the levels achieved in Angola; it was based on arming SWAPO forces and providing modest amounts of training for them. In principle, the USSR was unconvinced that South African acquiescence to a negotiated independence for Namibia was actually achievable. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union has been more appreciative of conflict resolution on the issue - as it was unwilling to take the costs of maintaining the conflict - than one would expect, with its objections giving way to active support (Zartman 1989, 184). In fact, Moscow’s stand on the issue drastically changed over the span of eight years, departing from straightforward obstructionism of every Western effort to find a solution to fundamental cooperation with the US which eventually helped steer the parties toward a peace agreement.

This shift in policy was a direct result a drastic change that occurred with Gorbachev’s accession to power and his new ‘perestroika’ policies (Shearman 1987). Although the US-led mediation attempts were never formally objected by the Soviets - as a result of the *détente* and coexistence prescribed by the Brezhnev doctrine - the mediation process was unable to produce any success as the mediators did not have sufficient leverage over the warring parties. Soviets had an obvious leverage over the MPLA and Cuba, but in light of the Cold War power rivalry with the US, they were unwilling to use it to assist the US in mediating the conflict. In fact, under the Brezhnev doctrine Soviets saw the US’s inability to mediate the conflict as a reflection of the ‘imperialist block’s’ decreasing global power and - since the bipolar dynamics of the Cold War were a zero sum game - an indication of the increasing Soviet influence in international relations. The rapprochement between the USSR and US that happened during the Gorbachev’s mandate was more a result of a larger geo-political shift in Soviet policies toward the US and its allies, than anything else.

5.3 Multiparty Mediation Process

5.3.1 Initial lack of cooperation between third parties

The unequivocal tendency to hamper any western initiative Moscow had exercised already during the preparation of the Resolution 435. In

face of a clear support by SWAPO and frontline states for the proposed text, Soviets backed off and abstained from vetoing the text in the Security Council. However, once the resolution was adopted, Moscow became its strongest promoter, now opposing any modification of the text. Thus, the US intention to link questions of Namibia and Angola, was strongly opposed as it represented “nothing less than an attempt to block Resolution 435, to force capitulations of Angola and its departure from the socialist camp, to join forces with Pretoria in creating a pro-Western security zone, and reverse the tide of history in Southern Africa” (Crocker 1999, 234).

The Soviet position was rapidly transposed on to the Angolan-Cuban joint communiqué in February 1982, a statement which officially proclaimed that Angolans and Cubans would decide upon a timeframe of Cuban withdrawal from the country only *after* Namibia was granted independence. Angola wanted to be assured that Cuban withdrawal would not allow for invasion by South African troops, as it had already occurred on two occasions, in 1976 and 1979, when withdrawal was interrupted by South African attacks on Angola (Zartman 1989, 212). The US was aware that the linkage strategy was introducing the necessity to accommodate Moscow in the process, as its leverage over the Angolans and Cubans might turn out to be instrumental for a successful outcome.

Increased UNITA military activities amplified Angola’s need for a stronger backing by its allies. By 1982 the number of Cuban troops increased to about 25 000, and the government in Luanda signed arms supplies agreements with the Soviet Union in mid-May 1983 and early January 1984 (Zartman 1989, 219). As the MPLA was strongly dependent on Soviet and Cuban support, the US administration assumed that any Angolan position and proposal had been ‘cleared’ in Havana and Moscow (Crocker 1999, 235). Since the Soviets were refusing any direct negotiation with the US, officials in Washington opted for a more cautious approach. Crocker points out that during these years, US and Soviet officials held a series of ‘informal exchanges’ on Southern Africa, where the US aimed to “avoid surprises, to probe for constructive openings and offer Moscow a chance to bid and to explain to US purposes and indicate how they might serve the interests of both sides” (Crocker 1999, 234). However, the initial exchanges did not produce any results as Moscow was insistent on bringing up legalistic issues and unwilling

to suggest any alternatives emphasizing their support for the latest Angolan positions.

In the meantime, various US attempts to promote the linkage strategy did not find any success in Pretoria and Luanda. Both sides were unwilling to compromise as any such move was perceived as dangerous for the national interest and the weakening of positions on the battleground. It was a clear 'game of chicken' between the parties, as they were unwilling to make the first move fearing the reaction of the other side. The US became fully aware that the conflict was still not 'ripe' for resolution and that on their own they were unable to achieve a settlement (Zartman 1989, 214-225). Quite problematic for the US was its lack of leverage, especially of 'sticks' over authorities in Pretoria, necessary to induce them to compromise. Unsatisfied with the South African uneasiness to cooperate, in 1985, the US adopted limited sanctions against Pretoria as a reaction to their apartheid policies, and started considering the option of clandestine support of the UNITA forces. Until then the US had limited ability to support UNITA, because of the Clark Amendment to the US Arms Export Control Act from 1976, which banned the US to aid any paramilitary activity in Angola (Berridge 1989). The intention was to put pressure on Pretoria and make it realize that the linkage-strategy was a good alternative to a complete isolation. The Amendment was repealed in July 1985, and already in 1986 the US provided UNITA with 10 million dollars in direct military aid. The assistance progressively increased to 80 million dollars under the Bush administration (Pycroft 1994, 245). According to Pycroft, "the increased US commitment to UNITA came as South Africa began reassessing its commitment to retaining control over Namibia, and therefore questioning its need to maintain UNITA as a bargaining chip in the linkage equation" (Pycroft 1994, 245). Nevertheless, South Africa, motivated by success on the battlefield in 1985, still did not see this as a plausible alternative. Two important events, one on the global level and one on the battleground, changed things dramatically.

5.3.2 Convergence of Interests between Third Parties

With the arrival of Gorbachev to power in 1985, the Soviet Union started an important transition in its relations to regional policies. The new Soviet leadership began publicly calling for 'political solutions' to

regional conflicts (Shearman 1987, 1111). The articulation of the new post-Brezhnev foreign policy of the Soviet Union was secondary to the need to concentrate on reforming the Soviet economy and society. According to Pycroft, the expensive foreign adventures in places such as Afghanistan and Angola had to be reduced as they were producing unbearable costs to the crippling Soviet economy, while at the same time the Soviet Union was quite willing to achieve “a limited rapprochement with the US to facilitate access to Western finance and technology” (Pycroft 1994, 244). It should be noted that these were only initial steps which did not immediately imply a reduction in opposing the US proposals (Crocker 1999, 235). In fact, publically the Soviet Union kept challenging the US led initiatives, asking for the process to be conferred to the UN, the African Union and the Non-Aligned Movement. More importantly, the Soviet Union still kept discouraging any Angolan cooperation with Washington and “criticized UN Secretariat officials for undertaking quiet probes of Luanda’s latest thinking on a linkage-based settlement” (Crocker 1999, 235). As hypothesized in H2, mediators’ inability to reach convergence of interests was leading the process into a deadlock. For the US this meant that a bigger obstacle to a smooth mediation process was not in Luanda’s positions but in Moscow’s lack of cooperation. In March 1987, after consulting its allies Angola decided to resume direct talks with the US. In order to make its negotiating position stronger, Moscow advised Luanda to undertake a massive offensive against UNITA (Crocker 1999, 236), using violence as an off-the-table tactic in order to improve ones negotiating position (Sisk 2009). As hypothesized in H4, defecting strategies of one of the mediators induced a party in conflict that was supported by the defecting mediator to defect from the peace process as well.

However, the strategy proposed by the Soviets actually backfired. The Soviet-Angolan assault in late 1987 was a fiasco, with thousands of Angolan troops killed and a large portion of Soviet military hardware either destroyed or captured. As the costs of supporting the conflict were increasing, Moscow started arguing for a political settlement, while still maintaining a hard line on US led endeavors. One of the crucial implications of the Gorbachev shift in foreign policy was that the MPLA could no longer depend upon “unqualified support” from the USSR and Cuba. A deteriorating economic situation in the Soviet Union induced officials in Moscow to reconsider overstressing their military

involvement around the globe. Pycroft notes that “although there was a commitment from the Soviet leadership to maintain the military presence in Angola to counter UNITA and South Africa, pressure began to mount on the MPLA to find a negotiated settlement” (Pycroft 1994, 244). While the Soviet military support was quite substantial, it came with a high cost. The MPLA had to finance this military support with oil and diamond revenue, and this was imposing a severe debt on the country’s economy. Almost 65% of Angola’s debt was with the USSR, and the presence of Cuban troops was costing the country 250 million dollars a year (Pycroft 1994, 244).

On the other hand, the MPLA had enough reason to believe that it could find partners in the West. First of all, the US was the largest importer of Angolan goods - especially oil - with a trade worth more than 2 billion dollars in 1990 (Pycroft 1994, 244). Secondly, despite the fact that the regime in Luanda was not recognized by the US, this did not prevent close contacts between the State Department and the MPLA (Berridge 1989, 470). In fact, Crocker was quite interested to have the MPLA at the negotiation table, and for this reason he initially even opposed the repeal of the Clark Amendment as he feared that this would drive the MPLA away from the talks (Berridge 1989, 470). Nevertheless, US unyielding support for UNITA’s cause was a direct indication to MPLA that a military victory was quite impossible, and that a negotiated settlement should be sought (Pycroft 1994, 245).

While acknowledging Cuba’s decision that its forces would have to leave Angola, Soviets maintained a firm position that Angola would not be “thrown to wolves” (Crocker 1999, 237). Despite these affirmations, the Soviet Union still did not propose any viable alternative to the linkage strategy. It was the Cubans who did not participate in the latest military debacle that made two crucial choices. First of all, Havana decided to shift the unfavorable balance of power created with the latest SADF-UNITA victory over their allies, and sent 15 000 fresh troops to Angola’s border with Namibia. It was a clear signal to South Africa that celebration time was over, and that a military solution to the conflict was far from being attainable for Pretoria (Berridge 1989; Pycroft 1994).

Ultimately, the US produced the necessary stick which induced South Africa to engage in negotiations. As the Soviet influence in Southern Africa was decreasing, the need of having South Africa as

an anti-communist ally was put to question. This induced the US to gradually start reconsidering its policy of constructive engagement with South Africa. Especially problematic were the apartheid policies of the Botha administration. In October 1986, the US Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, which imposed a strict set of economic and trade sanctions on South Africa. These policies caused severe complications to the South African economy, plunging the country into recession (Pycroft 1994, 245). Amounting problems, both on the battlefield and domestically, induced the officials in Pretoria to find a way to “re-establish favorable relations with the international community and stave off further sanctions” (idem). Thus, South Africa started signaling readiness to join the negotiations with the US and together with Angola started drafting a proposal on the timetable for the withdrawal. In other words, Pretoria was looking for an ‘honorable exit’. The situation was slowly becoming ripe for resolution: the parties were entering a hurting stalemate as it was clear that a military solution to the conflict was unattainable to any of the parties, thus they started perceiving a ‘way out’ through negotiations (Zartman 1989).

An important impact of the linkage strategy was the gradual exclusion of SWAPO and UNITA from the peace process. The isolation of the two movements was not done because of their predisposition to spoil the process, but was a calculated decision by Crocker to design a proper ‘party arithmetic’ which would include all the parties relevant for the achievement of a negotiated settlement, and exclude those whose presence could be problematic and disputed. According to Berridge, “the South Africans pressed for SWAPO’s exclusion because of their hatred of it, and found the United States receptive because this would make it easier to reconcile UNITA - which had a vital interest in developments in Namibia as well as in Angola - to being excluded as well” (Berridge 1989, 472).

Having both Cuba and Angola willing to talk to South Africa, the US decided to accommodate the Soviets in the peace process, while hoping to “neutralize residual obstructionism” and hopefully obtain “valuable insights and even help” (Crocker 1999, 237). In present circumstances, with the new policy outlook of the Gorbachev administration which was voicing out the need for policy solutions and was coupled with Moscow’s unwillingness to assume any more military costs in the region, the US opted for a careful approach. In April 1988 three in-

depth US-Soviet consultations were held, and as a final result for the first time the Soviet Union decided to publicly support a US led mediation process. In return the US bestowed them with an 'observer' status which was never fully defined. Meetings with the Soviets continued throughout the tripartite negotiations mediated by the US. It was tripartite (Angola-Cuba-South Africa) because Cuba explicitly asked to be included in the talks as a part of the Angola team. As underlined by Crocker, US-Soviet meetings soon moved from "debates about the shape of an acceptable settlement" to more practical issues of "how the two sides might advance those points agreed on and how current obstacles could be handled" (Crocker 1999, 237).

Full exploratory meetings between three sides and the US started in the beginning of May 1988 in London. The first meeting saw an immediate Angolan offer for a four-year Cuban withdrawal from Angola and a one-year withdrawal of SADF from Namibia. Before the troop withdrawal, however, the proposal called for a previous stop to US and South African support for UNITA. The South African delegation responded with a counterproposal asking for a Cuban withdrawal before Namibian independence and at the same time reconciliation between MPLA and UNITA (Zartman 1989, 230). Fortunately parties agreed to evaluate each others' proposals so they decided to meet again in Cairo at the end of June 1988. In the meantime, a series of US-Soviet consultations intensified, bearing more fruits than ever before. During their meetings both sides explored the options of strengthening cooperation of the three parties in the peace process. According to the Soviet sources, the US guaranteed South African implementation of Resolution 435 if in return the Cubans withdrew their forces from Angola within three years. During a Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Moscow in May, the two sides agreed to deliver a peace settlement within four months – in order to celebrate it at the tenth anniversary of Resolution 435. The two global powers, each backing a particular side in the conflict, had achieved necessary convergence of interests which allowed for a coordinated mediation process to take place (Zartman 1999, 230), providing support for what was previously hypothesized in H1 and H11c.

This coordination was best demonstrated during the talks in Cairo, which almost broke down due to an unexpected Cuban and Angolan 'ideological tirade' regarding apartheid policies of South Africa. The Soviet delegation immediately exercised necessary pressure on its allies

and brought them back to the point of negotiation (Zartman 1989, 231). Thanks to this unprecedented move by the Soviets, the next talks in New York saw all the parties work on the actual text of the settlement. The three sides started increasing levels of cooperation, and opted to neglect the timetable of withdrawal in favor of “indispensable principles” for the final settlement. These included: “aspects of cooperation (aid) for development, right to peace, right to self-determination, non-aggression, non-interference, non-use of force, and respect for territorial integrity and inviolability of frontiers, as well as recognition of roles – the United States as mediator and permanent members of the Security Council as guarantors” (Zartman 1989, 231). The principles were later ratified by all three sides and by SWAPO. After this, negotiations focused on developing details about the timetable for the withdrawal.

Also as a sign of willingness to elevate cooperation to the highest level, US officials continuously briefed Soviet colleagues about the “mediator’s priorities and game plans” (Crocker 1999, 238). The US hoped that by providing essential information, Soviets would play their part and induce Angola and Cuba to reach an agreement with South Africa about the timetable. At the same time Moscow also intensified communication with South Africa, and contributed to the overall super-power encouragement for authorities in Pretoria. Ultimately, through their consultations, US representatives convinced the Soviets to terminate their requests for a suspension of US support on UNITA, and encouraged them to put pressure on Angola for achieving national reconciliation with UNITA. This closed the circle, as all the issues were covered by the peace process. Shortly after, following a very painstaking negotiation on the details of withdrawal, on 22 December 22 1988 Cuba, Angola and South Africa signed a peace agreement at the UN headquarters in New York.

Just as in the case of Tajikistan, the US and USSR acted as biased mediators in the sense of the game theoretical model presented earlier. The case shows sufficient support for hypotheses H3 and H4, indicating that when the mediators manage to achieve convergence of policy objectives among them, there are bigger chances that the peace process will be successful. In other words, as long as the US and the Soviet Union were unable to achieve convergence of interests in managing the conflict, any attempt at finding a peaceful solution was unsuccessful as a mediator’s defection was perceived as a sufficient reason for the con-

flicting parties not to commit to the peace process. At the same time, as was hypothesized earlier (H1), biased mediators are useful of the effectiveness to the process, as long as they maintain cooperative behavior with other mediators, as they can use their special relationship with one conflicting side to influence its behavior, positions and perceptions and consequently move it toward an agreement. However, the process also witnessed a considerably different dynamic of multiparty mediation from the one that took place in Tajikistan. The crucial difference between the two cases concerns the leadership role of coordinating mediation activities. While in Tajikistan this role was filled by the Special Envoys of the UN, in the case of Namibia, the leadership role was assumed by the US.

Although the US as a powerful state had a clear set of interests to promote in the conflict, and undeniably a biased attitude toward particular conflicting sides (UNITA and South Africa, as it will be explained later), it managed to be an effective coordinator for two reasons. First of all, over time its mediation activities were recognized as 'indispensible' even by the disputants with whom it had no special relations (MPLA and Cuba). This generated the necessary level of legitimacy to prescribe behavior, as was hypothesized by H10. In fact this status was publicly and explicitly accepted by all the parties in conflict, which considered the US-led mediation to be one of the 14 principles that were crucial to a peaceful settlement of their conflict (Berridge 1989, 469). At the same time, as hypothesized in H11c, it acquired the necessary degree of consent and convergence of interests with the USSR (which was the key patron state of both the Angolan MPLA and Cuba). This (causal link) permitted for the coordination to be effective even though it was conducted by a biased powerful state.

The convergence of interests was induced by a larger geo-political shift that occurred once (the new) leadership in the Soviet Union realized that past geo-political preferences were not generating sufficient returns in the conflict: the conflict was too costly and the parties were not gaining any results from the mediation process. Such a change in perceptions was further strengthened by the reached stalemate between Cuban and South African forces, and their partners in Angola and Namibia. It was an unequivocal indication that a military victory in the conflict is unfeasible and that the present non-cooperative strategy in the peace process was not producing any substantial results that wo-

uld outweigh the military stalemate. Such dynamics provide sufficient support for causal links that were hypothesized in H5, H6 and H7.

