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Apartheid's Last Hope: The International Fight for Walvis Bay, 1966-1994

Lila Quinn

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Dr. Meghan Healy-Clancy, Thesis Director
Dr. Paul Rubinson, Committee Member
Dr. Wing Kai-To, Committee Member

In 1959, a young man was traveling around southern Africa with a bible in hand, dressed as a preacher and looking ready to give a sermon. However, his plan was not to give a hearty Christian lesson to the masses, but rather to accomplish something highly illegal. In his hometown of Walvis Bay, the man planned to set up a cell for the newly developed Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO), which would transform the next year into the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO). As a leader with a political dream, and an organization to represent it, he, along with his co-leaders, began a long resistance against the South African government's occupation of South West Africa (present day Namibia.) This occupation included Walvis Bay, a port city located in the middle of the coast. This preacher-imposter turned out to be Sam Nujoma, Namibia's future first president.¹

Not long after his rebellious travels around Namibia, Nujoma would be exiled from his native country for planning a resistance movement against the apartheid government occupying his homeland. In December of 1959, Nujoma had protested against a forced removal of native Namibian people from one town to another town that would fall under apartheid policy. This resistance ended up with twelve unarmed people dead.² Resistance leaders like Nujoma were clear targets not only in South West Africa but South Africa as well. Three months, a similar resistance against apartheid would lead to a police massacre in Sharpeville, South Africa, and the banning of the African National Congress (ANC), and exiling of its leaders.³ Therefore, the ruling gov-

¹ Slatter, Mick. "Harboring their port." *Africa Report* 39, no. 3 (1994): 65, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 2, 2017).

² "Dr. Nujoma: Founder of SNF," *The Same Nujoma Foundation*, accessed October 11, 2017, <http://www.samnujomafoundation.org/founder.html>.

³ "Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa: South Africa and Namibia," *The Unesco Press:Paris*, 1974, 94, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0001/000122/012289eo.pdf>.

ernment deemed Nujoma a threat and exiled him. Nujoma then fled to present day Tanzania, meeting other African nationalist leaders on his way.⁴ At the time, many people of different African countries had joined various resistance movements similar to Nujoma's, with a common theme of fighting against European colonialism and plainly unfair rule. These resistance movements had a goal of independence for African countries. Death, war, and heartache plagued Africa throughout these resistance movements, but by the 1970s most African countries had gained independence and freedom from foreign rule. A few exceptions were left behind, especially in southern Africa, where Namibia and South Africa faced the suffocating and stubborn apartheid regime. Their relief would not come until 1994.

In the long anti-apartheid struggle, Nujoma's hometown of Walvis Bay, Namibia's only deep-water port, was a crystal ball that would reveal the future of southern Africa. With the growing threat of newly independent countries and rising liberation movements, South African officials saw Walvis Bay as a "gateway to Africa" and believed that their control of the port acted as "insurance" in the region.⁵ The potential of Walvis Bay led to years of dispute over who held sovereignty over it. South Africa had a history of legal control over Walvis Bay since 1910, while SWAPO argued that Walvis Bay should be part of an independent South West Africa called Namibia. Between the 1960s and early 1990s, the dispute boiled. In this thesis, I argue that both sides saw South African control over Walvis Bay as one of the last chances that apartheid had of surviving.

⁴ Sam Nujoma, *Where Others Wavered* (Panaf Books, 2001), 209.

⁵ John Battersby, "S. Africa, Namibia Try For Walvis Bay Settlement," *The Christian Science Monitor Archive*, September 21 1990, <https://www.csmonitor.com/1990/0921/obay.html>.

This thesis examines the dispute of Walvis Bay chronologically, beginning with a general background of Namibian history and Walvis Bay's history. Walvis Bay became apart of the British Cape Colony in 1878, while the rest of what is now Namibia was colonized by Germany to make German South West Africa in 1884. When Germany lost its African colonies in World War I, the Union of South Africa (a white-controlled dominion of the British Empire, including the former Cape Colony) took over South West Africa as a League of Nations mandate. With the South West Africa Affairs Act of 1922, South Africa controlled Walvis Bay *as a part of* South West Africa. With the rise of apartheid in 1948, the South African government was so intent on keeping control over the whole of Namibia that it would continuously break and ignore international law just to keep it in its hands. This led to war between SWAPO and the apartheid government from 1966. In 1977, South Africa made Walvis Bay a territory of South Africa's Cape Province, this repealing the South West Africa Affairs Act, so they could hold on to Walvis Bay as part of South Africa even if Namibia was granted independence. This transfer gave a leg up to the South African government in claiming Walvis Bay as an integral part of South Africa and *not* Namibia. The United Nations then passed Resolution 432 in 1978 which recognized that Walvis Bay at least had to be planned to be integrated into South West Africa in the future. This represented the international recognition of Walvis Bay naturally belonging to the people of South West Africa and to a future Namibia.⁶ Namibia gained independence in 1990 from South Africa with the SWAPO party elected, making Sam Nujoma president. But it was not until 1994 that Walvis Bay was officially transferred from South African control to independent Namibia's

⁶ This essay will use three different terms to explain the history of present day Namibia and present the evolution of the name itself given to the designated area. German South West Africa, South West Africa, and Namibia all refer to the borders of 1994 and present day Namibia including Walvis Bay unless expressed otherwise.

control. For SWAPO, South African officials, United Nations officials, and other observers around the world, Walvis Bay's sovereignty was one of the final and critical debates of decolonization in Africa.

Today, Walvis Bay holds strategic and economic importance for Namibia. China's government and companies are spending billions of dollars investing in projects within the Walvis Bay area and around it. From uranium mines to shopping malls to massive highways, China and its people are on big projects in Namibia. Chinese diplomat Xia Lili commented on China's history in supporting SWAPO during those critical years of independence. Now that the independence has been won and established, the diplomat commented on how Namibia's independence plays a role in China's economy: "We're helping it [Namibia] fight for economic emancipation."⁷ However, Namibia's people still suffer tremendously on a economic level from apartheid's legacy, and many local people have only come to criticize China's presence in the country as a colonial one. This thesis sheds light on the question: what is it about little Walvis Bay that has superpowers so interested in it, historically and even today?

Scholarly Perspectives on the Walvis Bay Dispute

A small amount of research has been done specifically about Namibia and its independence struggle.⁸ An even smaller amount has focused on the Walvis Bay dispute. Though scholars point out that South Africa did have some legitimate claims to Walvis Bay, they agree that ultimately

⁷ Brook Larmer, "Is China the World's New Colonial Power?" *The New York Times*, May 2, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/02/magazine/is-china-the-worlds-new-colonial-power.html>.

⁸ See: Sam Nujoma, *Where Others Wavered* (Panaf Books, 2001), and Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa 1976-1991*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 2013, and Lauren Dobell, *Swapo's Struggle for Namibia, 1960-1991: War by Other Means*, (P. Schlettwein Publishing Switzerland, 2000).

Walvis Bay rightfully belongs to the government and people of Namibia, through legal analysis and political history. To many, Walvis Bay was key to economic success not only for Namibia but for southern Africa as well. Most Walvis Bay scholarship was written before 1994, which was the year Walvis Bay was officially transferred over to Namibia. Therefore, there is little scholarship concerning Walvis Bay after its integration into Namibia.

Considering South Africa's illegal hold over Namibia for a number of years, it would only make sense for lawyers to evaluate the case of Walvis Bay and who had rightful sovereignty over it, as the editors of *The Yale Law Journal* examined in 1980, during the height of the dispute. Presented immediately is South Africa's main argument for Walvis Bay: British annexation of Walvis Bay back in 1878, as a part of the Cape Colony in what became the Union of South Africa in 1910, gives the South Africa government rightful sovereignty over Walvis Bay. *The Yale Law Journal* deems this argument illegitimate.⁹ South Africa had legal claims over Walvis Bay and Namibia, during European colonialism in Africa. However, South Africa continued to make this argument when it was no longer valid in the years of decolonization in Africa and a new age of self-determination, in international law of the United Nations. By 1980, their rightful claims to Walvis Bay were long expired, despite desperate attempt to renew them.

Not only does it legally make sense, Walvis Bay geographically and economically makes sense to be a part of an independent Namibia. Ronald Dreyer wrote an article titled "Dispute Over Walvis Bay - Origins and Implications for Namibian Independence," which was published in 1984, ten years before Walvis Bay was finally transferred to Namibian control. His main argument surrounds the exploitation of Walvis Bay (and by extension Namibia) by the South

⁹ "Namibia, South Africa, and the Walvis Bay Dispute," *The Yale Law Journal*, vol.89, no.5 (1980): 903, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/796090>.

African government in the name of strategic, political, and economic significance.¹⁰ He argues that if South Africa's control over Walvis Bay continued after Namibian independence, Namibia would be independent on paper but economically, politically, and structurally reliant on South Africa due to its control over Walvis Bay: "It could therefore restrict the country's options for structural independence from South Africa and retard the process of decolonization in Southern Africa."¹¹ Dreyer argues many South African officials used Walvis Bay to "resist radical change within South Africa" through economic power and threats.¹² Dreyer comes across the same problem I have as he mentions the historiography on Walvis Bay's sovereignty issue is seriously lacking, calling it a "historiographical lacuna."¹³

Once 1990 came about with Namibia's independence from South Africa, it was clear that South Africa was in trouble not only at home but also in Walvis Bay. In 1990, Graham Evans focused on legal and humanistic aspects on who had rightful sovereignty over Walvis Bay in "Walvis Bay, South Africa, and the Question of Sovereignty."¹⁴ Evans notably described Walvis Bay as "one of Africa's glittering prizes."¹⁵ Economically, Walvis Bay provided two million tons of cargo a year at the time for South Africa, and the popular fishing industry in the area promised

¹⁰ Ronald Dreyer, "Dispute over Walvis Bay--Origins and Implications for Namibian Independence," *African Affairs* vol. 83, no. 333 (1984): 497-510, <http://www.jstor.org.libserv-prd.bridgew.edu/stable/722921>.

¹¹ Dreyer, 497.

¹² Dreyer, 510.

¹³ Dreyer, 497.

¹⁴ Graham Evans, "Walvis Bay: South Africa, Namibia, and the Question of Sovereignty," *Royal Institute of International Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 3 (1990): 559-568, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2623074>.

¹⁵ Evans, 561.

over one billion dollars for the South Africa in 1989.¹⁶ Strategically, Walvis Bay is one of two Namibian coastal towns with railway connections to all over Namibia, making imports and exports easy and efficient to access to the interior of southern Africa, important in the possibility of another major war.

Evans, while acknowledging the vital components that make up Walvis Bay, focuses on a broader question: Why is South Africa *really* holding on to Walvis Bay? Putting in perspective South Africa's reputation for exploitation, with heavy roots in colonialism, Evans paints the picture of a manipulative Pretoria over Walvis Bay. Continuing to hold Walvis Bay would not only have strategic and economic perks, he argues that it is a "powerful guarantee of good behavior [from Namibia and SWAPO] after independence."¹⁷ In addition, he projects the view of Walvis Bay by Pretoria as a small part of its grand pursuit for world status. Not only that, but Evans takes the view that the hold on Walvis Bay was somewhat of a last hope for South Africa's dream of a "constellation of states" that Pretoria dominated in the region.¹⁸ Similarly, in 1990, Lynn Berat, an expert in the *Emory International Law Review*, examined "through a historical perspective"¹⁹ who had rightful sovereignty over Walvis Bay, demonstrating that SWAPO was "in line with modern thinking" but had struggled with "the realities of power in the world" during apartheid.²⁰

¹⁶ Evans, 561-562.

¹⁷ Evans, 562.

¹⁸ Evans, 567.

¹⁹ Lynn Berat, "The Evolution of Self-Determination in International Law: South Africa, Namibia, and the Case of Walvis Bay," *Emory International Law Review*, vol.4 (1990): 252.

²⁰ Berat, 290.

Looking back onto the story of Walvis Bay, from a 2017 perspective, offers great benefits: with more distance comes more information and more perspective. With this thesis, I aim to fill in the historical gaps these authors could not and aim to talk about Walvis Bay in broader terms of decolonization and the end of apartheid.

The reality of working with Walvis Bay's history is that many primary sources can be difficult to locate. Some documents are not accessible unless you have special access to unreleased government files or visit Namibia, South Africa, or even Cuba. The most important documents are primarily those that came out of United Nations agreements. Though only mentioned briefly, General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) would be the starting point to help set the tone of the attitude of the international community in a modern and decolonized mindset.²¹ It stated that societies had a right to decide how they want their government to run without foreign interference. The resolution called for an end to colonialism which, unlike other African nations, Walvis Bay would not see until the mid-1990s. Due to the international community's investment into Namibia and Walvis Bay, many of the most critical documents are easily accessible. The most important document in the history of Walvis Bay is United Nations Security Council Resolution 432, which passed in 1978.²² Resolution 435 not long after was passed causing some controversy not only on the South African side but also on SWAPO's side.²³ These resolutions provide insight to the international community's goals and attitudes towards the many complex layers that involve this dispute on Walvis Bay.

²¹ "General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV)," *United Nations*, Dec. 14, 1960.

²² "Resolution 432," *United Nations Security Council*, July 1978.

²³ "Resolution 435," *United Nations Security Council*, September 1978.

On note of international involvement, due to the connections between the Cold War concerns and the life span of apartheid, there are United States documents that are easily accessible when talking about Walvis Bay. The Wilson Center online provides a number of primary sources on African subjects. Most notably, a documentation of a conversation between South Africa's foreign minister, Pik Botha and 1980s Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester Crocker, the two discuss the relationship between the U.S. and South Africa amidst an international "call out" against apartheid. Pik Botha also mentions his concerns that Cuban presence in southern Africa would pose a threat to Namibia and especially Walvis Bay, saying that their presence in the port would guarantee a SWAPO victory while trying to convince Crocker this it would be a loss for both governments.²⁴ The same year, Pik Botha wrote a letter to US Secretary of State A.M. Haig, Jr., with a similar goal of convincing the U.S. that South African goals in Namibia and Walvis Bay were the same Cold War goals the U.S. has: "It is our understanding, moreover, that both the United States Government and the South African Government recognize that this joint goal can only be achieved within the ambit of stabilization of the Southern African region and the exclusion of Soviet and Soviet-surrogate forces."²⁵

Other key documents used were the statements and terms of the transfer of Walvis Bay from South Africa to Namibia in the mid 1990s.²⁶ In the midst of glorious words of victory, these documents reveal that South African officials claimed that the transfer of the port was South

²⁴ "Memorandum of Conversation Between R. F. Botha and Chester Crocker of the US Department of State: April 15, 1981," *Wilson Center Digital Archive*.

²⁵ "Letter from South African Minister of Foreign Affairs R.F. Botha to US Secretary of State A.M. Haig Jr.," *Wilson Center: Digital Archive International History Declassified*, May 1981, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118260>.

²⁶ "Treaty between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of the Republic of Namibia with respect to Walvis Bay and the off-shore Islands :February 28,1994, *United Nations*.

Africa's choice and not due to the massive amount of external and internal pressure the apartheid system was facing in the 1990s, making clear how they saw the Bay as one of apartheid's last hopes for survival.

Unfortunately, it is especially difficult to find documentation of average people's experiences in Walvis Bay. I have been able to find some accounts such as letters from an American traveler and journalist named Casey Kelso, who was able to interview and talk with people who were living and working in Walvis Bay during the last years of apartheid. From interviewing workers off the street to high-profile Namibian politicians, Kelso came across them all to get a glimpse into what apartheid Walvis Bay looked like to those inside of it.²⁷ Newspaper articles also focuses on the people Walvis Bay living in an overlooked zone where apartheid policies were applied.²⁸

Early History of Namibia and Walvis Bay

The borders of Namibia as of today did not exist pre-colonization. Many current African borders were originally created as colonial borders, for the Europeans. Previous to European arrival, the area of Namibia was home for 11,000 years to one of the oldest peoples in history known as the San (Bushmen). Before colonization, Namibia also included the lands of the Nama (in Great Namaqualand), the Herero, and the Ovambo (Nujoma's ethnic group). As *The Yale Law Journal* notes, very early European arrivals and travelers in Great Namaqualand recognized the complexity of the region's political system, thus recognizing African sovereignty over the area which did

²⁷ Casey Kelso, "In the Twilight (Zone) of Apartheid: Walvis Bay," *Institute of Current World Affairs*, May 15, 1992, <http://www.icwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/CCK-8.pdf>.

²⁸ For instance: Allister Sparks, "Walvis Bay switches apartheid on and off," *The Observer*, November 28, 1982, 15.

include Walvis Bay.²⁹ The native tribe of Walvis Bay, the Topnaarr Nama, one of the seven Nama tribes, still inhabit the area to this day.³⁰ In addition, Walvis Bay served as a key part in the early nation, acting a part of early highway systems using the main rivers which connected Walvis Bay to the rest of Great Namaqualand. As the journal explains, “[...] the Nama possessed sovereign rights over the whole of Great Namaqualand, of which Walvis Bay was an integral part.[...] Modern Namibia is a successor of these rights.”³¹

The separation of Walvis Bay and Namibia was only as old as European colonization itself. In 1878, Britain officially called Walvis Bay its own and annexed the territory, mostly acting out of fear the Germans would recognize Walvis Bay’s potential and act on it. By 1890, the British and the Germans agreed that Walvis Bay would be under British control and German South West Africa (Namibia excluding Walvis Bay) would belong to the Germans.³² It was here that the political recognition of Walvis Bay’s separation from Namibia began, and here is where future conflict would originate. The British would control Walvis Bay as a part of its Cape Colony. In 1910, the British Cape and Natal Colonies would merge with other conquered lands to become the Union of South Africa, a new dominion of the British Empire. In 1910, Walvis Bay was thus officially transferred to the Union of South Africa, as part of the old Cape Colony, now the Cape Province.³³ With the end of World War I, Germany lost control over most of its foreign territories including German South West Africa, thus being forced to pass their prized territory

²⁹ “Namibia, South Africa, and the Walvis Bay Dispute,” 914.

³⁰ “Namibia, South Africa, and the Walvis Bay Dispute,” 914-15.

³¹ “Namibia, South Africa, and the Walvis Bay Dispute,” 915-16.

³² See Appendix A

³³ Dreyer, 497-506.

over to South Africa. The “new” South West Africa became a League of Nations Class C Mandate under South Africa in 1920.³⁴ Two years later the South West Africa Affairs Act of 1922 officially merged Walvis Bay and South West Africa, and by 1929 Walvis Bay and South West Africa were being fully operated, together, under the South African government. When the League of Nations mandates were transferred to the United Nations after World War II, South West Africa (including Walvis Bay) was supposed to become a UN Trust Territory and thus was to be prepared for independence. South Africa denied the agreement and ruled South West Africa under apartheid laws, where white residents had representation in South Africa’s Parliament from 1949. Additionally, South Africa would go off of the UN having no power over their mandate status, arguing it was created by the League of Nations and could only be dismantled by the League of Nations.³⁵

The Year of Africa Without South West Africa: The 1960s

By 1960, South Africa’s hold on South West Africa and Walvis Bay had finally met its match as the United Nations established Resolution 1415. In short, this resolution said that native people in colonial territories had every legal right to determine how they wanted their territories to be governed without foreign interference: “The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation.”³⁶ Due to the shift of thinking from foreign power rule to self-determination and democracy as well

³⁴ See Appendix B

³⁵ *Yale Law Journal*, 907-909.

³⁶ “General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV),” 1960.

as UN resolutions like 1415, 1960 was deemed the “Year of Africa,” which was one of the singular most important events for African history to date. Seventeen African countries would declare 1960 as their year of independence³⁷ and most others followed suit within the next ten years or so.³⁸ South West Africa was not one of these countries.

In fact, South West Africa was seemingly lightyears away from even the hope of gaining any sort of independence. While other African countries triumphed over their colonizers in the 1960s, Walvis Bay was the site of a new South African project. A military depot in the coastal location opened in 1962, in addition to a nearby military base expansion. The store would be used to supply South African Defense Forces (SADF) with necessary military gear, suggesting the South African military had no intention of leaving the area any time soon. Conflict was just beginning to heat up.

April 19, 1960 was the official birthdate of SWAPO, with Nujoma as president.³⁹ The more SWAPO’s support grew in the territory, including Walvis Bay, the more South Africa became nervous. One scholar, Lauren Dobell, argues that SWAPO’s philosophy, though primarily looked at as a clear socialist movement for Namibians, was in fact intentionally vague in order to fit the times. “SWAPO’s real political thinking during this period, despite its own public claims and those of both allies and enemies, never moved beyond its nationalist programme of the 1960s. The socialist rhetoric of its 1976 documents [including their constitution] was a consequence of pragmatism, not a conviction, and was as easily revived or abandoned when circum-

³⁷ Daniel Schwartz, “1960: The Year of Africa,” *CBC News*, June 8, 2010, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/1960-the-year-of-africa-1.909381>.

³⁸ Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

³⁹ “Constitution of the South West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO) of Namibia,” July 28-August 1 1976, 36.

stances demanded.”⁴⁰ SWAPO was intelligent enough to appeal to the masses while also knowing what would get their cause attention from socialist Third World countries like Cuba and their allies in the United Nations.

While African countries like Somalia and Senegal could remember 1960 as the year of freedom, 1960 marked the year of apartheid lockdown in South Africa. The anti-apartheid group, Pan-African Congress (PAC), a break-off group of the African National Congress (ANC), held a public protest against the apartheid system near local police stations in Sharpeville, near Johannesburg, in March 1960. The protest was peaceful but angry. Threatened by the 20,000 protestors, the police fired into the crowd killing 69 people and wounding hundreds more. Instead of reevaluating their oppressive system, it was easier for the South African government to blame the leaders of the PAC and the ANC for establishing protests that caused so much damage. Both groups were banned and any political organizations over twelve people was outlawed, in addition to the government declaring a state of emergency in reaction, in April 1960.⁴¹

Following the massacre, international reactions were strong. As *Time Magazine* reported, “In London, a crowd shouting ‘Murder!’ had to be dispersed from South Africa House [...] In Vatican City, L'Osservatore Romano demanded to know why South Africa's police ‘did not employ such modern means as water hoses and tear gas, which are in use in all civilized countries,’ [...] Nowhere in the world did a single government side with South Africa.”⁴² The fir-

⁴⁰ Lauren Dobell, “Swapo's Struggle for Namibia, 1960-1991: War by Other Means” *P. Schlettwein Publishing Switzerland*, (2000), 59.

⁴¹ Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, (Routledge Publishing, 2016), 64-65.

⁴² "The Sharpeville Massacre." *Time* 75, no. 14 (April 4, 1960): 20. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed December 1, 2017).

ing of guns on the crowd at Sharpeville were truly the shots heard around the world. South Africa was hoping to remain in the British Commonwealth, but when the international community became strongly anti-apartheid, South Africa ended up pulling out of the Commonwealth to save face in May 1961.⁴³ In December, the ANC formed an armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), and plotted to overthrow the state.

In March 1966, Nujoma and fellow SWAPO leader Hifikepunye Pohamba flew to Namibia's capital Windhoek, after traveling throughout Africa organizing support for SWAPO. To meet them at their arrival were South African officials, who arrested the both of them and deported both to Zambia.⁴⁴ Like the ANC, SWAPO became a militant, exiled liberation movement, aiming to overthrow apartheid. By August of the same year, the Namibian War of Independence broke out between SWAPO's guerrilla branch, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), AND SADF.⁴⁵ In October of 1966, the General Assembly revoked South Africa's mandate over South West Africa.⁴⁶ It declared that the territory would now be run as an international territory until independence due to South Africa's failure to follow Resolution 1514. The South African government continued to ignore international law and remained in the area.

In the 1960s, both South Africa and SWAPO sought to control Walvis Bay as a part of Namibia. A South African documentation that came out in 1967 stated, "The total area [of South West Africa] is 824,269 square kilometers (318,261 sq. miles) including the area. of Walvis Bay

⁴³ "South Africa: History" *The Commonwealth*, <http://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/south-africa/history>.

⁴⁴ "Dr. Nujoma: Founder of SNF," *The Sam Nujoma Foundation*, October 11 2017, <http://www.samnujomafoundation.org/founder.html>.

⁴⁵ Dobell, 51-55.

⁴⁶ "General Assembly 2145 (XXI)" *United Nations*, October 28, 1966.

(1,124 sq. kilometers or 434 sq. miles) which, although part of the Republic of South Africa, is administered, for convenience, as part of South West Africa...⁴⁷ In addition, SWAPO requested the General Assembly now refer to South West Africa (including Walvis Bay) as Namibia, which they fulfilled in 1968.⁴⁸ The name Namibia is known to come from a Walvis Bay native by the name of Mburumba Kerina who has a legacy of being the first Namibian to petition the UN on South Africa's presence on the territory. In an interview, he says that he was inspired⁴⁹ to change his country's name to Namibia after the country's Namib desert meaning "the vast place."⁵⁰ Furthering resistance, the world would begin to talk about Namibia and criticizing the existence of South West Africa.

Boiling Blood: The 1970s

South Africa would continue to ignore the international community urge for the country to leave Namibia and end apartheid. If anything, the apartheid policies would only get stronger but attempt to be sneakier. Walvis Bay would be no stranger to these policies. Bantustans started to become normal in South Africa. Very simply put, the "bantustans" were areas designed for black Africans to move and reside to based on supposed ethnic tribes. Usually on undesirable

⁴⁷ Elizabeth S. Landis, "If It Quacks Like a Duck: Walvis Bay, Namibia, and Estoppel," *Michigan State University Libraries Special Collections*, June 19 1981, 12, http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-245B.

⁴⁸ Berat, 259.

⁴⁹ Kerina had a fellowship with Indonesia's President Sukarno. In a conversation between the two, Sukarno asked Kerina what his country was called. When Kerina answered with South West Africa, the president responded: "That's not a name, that is a geographical area. My son, slaves and dogs are named by their masters. Free men name themselves." See Limba Mupetami of *The Man Who Named Namibia: Mburumba Kerina*.

⁵⁰ Limba Mupetami, "The Man Who Named Namibia: Mburumba Kerina," *The Namibian*, September 9 2014, <https://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=127811&page=archive-read>, AND "Inspiration for the name 'Namibia': Professor Mburumba Kerina," *Faces of Namibia*, May 24 2017, <http://faces-of-namibia.com/story/inspiration-for-the-name-namibia-professor-mburumba-kerina/>.

land, these areas were away from the white people living in the urban areas and locally governed by people chosen by Pretoria.⁵¹ These bantustans were made to look as if they were independently and along the lines of a “Year of Africa” international attitude of self-governing. However, they were anything but and this would be just an attempt by South Africa to look as if apartheid was being dismantled.

In the 1970s, SWAPO was increasingly seen internationally as representing the people of South West Africa, despite being exiled from it and becoming a growing enemy of South Africa. Due to this new strength and support, South Africa in the 1970s will make drastic changes and clear attempts to save whatever they can of the status quo in southern Africa to their benefit. Despite international support for what SWAPO is fighting for, South Africa will not back down without a fight.

By the 1970s, the population of Walvis Bay had grown to become the home of over 14,000 black Namibians and just over 7,000 white Namibians.⁵² Though a small population, the numbers show a large disproportion of black Namibians to whites in the area. To reiterate, Walvis Bay and the rest of Namibia were subject to South Africa’s system of apartheid favoring their white population and white control. The black population of Walvis Bay could not escape these brutal policies even hundreds of miles away from Pretoria, and in addition received no “special treatment” for being the most economically and strategically vital area of Namibia for the South African government.⁵³ Casey Kelso, while traveling in Walvis Bay on fellowship later

⁵¹ Saul Dubow, *Apartheid: 1948-1994*, Oxford University Press, 2014, 105-109.

⁵² Dreyer, 499.

⁵³ David Simon, “Decolonization and Local Government in Namibia: The Neo-Apartheid Plan, 1977-83,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, September 1985, 508.

during apartheid control in Walvis Bay, described the life of black Namibians working in Walvis Bay:

Like any other city under apartheid rule, Walvis Bay has "locations" far from the downtown civic center for the non-whites. For blacks, each evening means a long trek out to Kuisebmond, the black town that is home to 10,000 people. Really, the word "town" does not apply, since the depressing place has all the warmth of a prison cell block. [...] There are no stores, forcing blacks to spend their money in the white city they are unwelcome to live inside. No street signs, no stoplights. Nothing to signify this is a community, instead of a concentration camp. Most residents have been working in the fishing factories for years, spending more time in the port city than in Namibia. Yet they must present their documents to border guards when returning to Walvis Bay from visiting family in Namibia. A municipal compound that houses thousands of seasonal workers sits in the middle of the town. Up to 16 men share one sleeping room in the jail-like complex, bedding down on concrete bunks. Outside the compound, sleeping arrangements aren't much better. Endless rows of two-room homes line narrow, dirty streets.⁵⁴

Allister Sparks, an anti-apartheid journalist mentioned that white people did have grievances over apartheid laws in their community. Those grievances having to do with the strict liquor laws that is.⁵⁵ On the opposite side, a Walvis Bay businessman, Vernon Webster, told Sparks that he got in trouble with the police for allowing leasing to black tenants on his properties. He chose to go to jail rather than pay a fine for refusing to evict them. This was his resistance against the apartheid government which was a "diplomatic strategy [by South Africa] to ensure that an independent Namibia would be totally dependent on [South Africa] economically."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Kelso, 9.

⁵⁵ Sparks mentions that with enough "popular demand" these laws changed to allow more flexibility on liquor.

⁵⁶ Sparks, "Walvis Bay switches apartheid on and off."

On the economic side, Walvis Bay was beginning to show some progress, fueling hope for potential gains. By 1973 and going into 1974, 50% more cargo was being handled at Walvis Bay (1,456,259 tons) in comparison to the numbers of 1963.⁵⁷ About one million tons of cargo a year were handled at the port in addition to seeing thousands of ships dock every year.⁵⁸

The 1962 opening of the military depot was only a stepping stone in a larger plan for military confrontation in the area. The 1970s would allow for all three of SADF's branches (the army, navy, and air force) to have bases at Walvis Bay.⁵⁹ SADF's conflicts in Angola against SWAPO and The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) were growing, and so were their military needs.

In addition to the growing contact and support between Angola and Namibia, in 1974 Portuguese dictatorship fell, and in 1975 Angola gained independence from Portugal. This meant the borders between Angola and Namibia were more open and in turn, much to apartheid leaders' fear, made SWAPO even stronger as an organization. As SWAPO celebrated in their Constitution, the decolonization of Portuguese Africa over 1974-1975: "has made it possible for thousands of our people to move across the Angolan/Namibian frontiers to the rear bases of our struggle to obtain both the skill and tools of armed struggle. Hence, thousands of workers, peasants and patriotic intellectuals have been enlisting into PLAN since the early half of 1974."⁶⁰ The

⁵⁷ Dreyer, 504.

⁵⁸ According to Casey Kelso, journalist traveling in Namibia during 1992, these numbers were provided by the South African Port Authority. The Port Authority "refused" to reveal the exact figures of the port. Interestingly, the Port Authority had no problems on releasing the exact numbers for other South African ports like Durban but not Walvis Bay. When Kelso asked an official why the numbers were so secretive he wrote: "[the official] wouldn't explain why he was forbidden to discuss Walvis Bay exports." See, *In the Twilight Zone of Apartheid: Walvis Bay*, page 9.

⁵⁹ Kelso, 8.

⁶⁰ "Constitution of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) of Namibia," 38.

independence of Angola truly frightened South Africa because this meant its control of Namibia was left vulnerable and exposed to successful independence movements: “South Africa's prolonged efforts to incorporate Namibia were thrown into reverse by the Portuguese coup of April 1974, which precipitated Angolan and Mozambican independence and accelerated the decolonization process in Southern Africa as a whole.”⁶¹

After achieving independence from Portugal in 1975, Angola broke out into civil war over their own question of control. Angola's ruling MPLA was backed by the Cubans and allies like SWAPO fighting for liberation, against the People's Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola (FAPLA) and National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which were both backed by the South African government for their anti-communist stances. SADF troops invaded Angola the same year, in response to Cuba sending in their own troops to the region to help the MPLA. Cuba helped the MPLA and SWAPO to force SADF to recede: “Cuba has prevented South Africa from getting its way in Angola. South Africa wanted UNITA in power, believing that UNITA would deny SWAPO bases in Angola.[...] South Africa wants to prevent SWAPO from gaining control of Namibia, its last buffer state.”⁶²

It is in the latter half of the 1970s that the question of Walvis Bay's control becomes more frequently asked, with responses becoming blunter. Throughout this Walvis Bay debate, there were questions of where Walvis Bay literally fit into the world, whether it belonged to South Africa, to Namibia/SWAPO, or in international hands. Due to their growing strength, Angolan independence, and even Cuban backed military support in the fight for Namibian indepen-

⁶¹ Simon, 508.

⁶² Owen Ellison, Kahn "Cuba's Impact in Southern Africa," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 29, no. 3 (1987): 51.

dence, SWAPO suddenly became an urgent threat to the South African government, and Pretoria had to clarify their position on Walvis Bay. In April of 1976, Prime Minister John Vorster of South Africa stated clearly to those challenging the status of Walvis Bay that: “There are people in South West Africa, and in the outside world in particular, who adopt the standpoint that Walvis Bay belongs to South West Africa. I do not want there to be any misunderstanding whatsoever about this. Walvis Bay belongs to South Africa.”⁶³ Just a month later, SWAPO held its annual congress in the very spot Vorster had claimed as distinctly South Africa’s. SWAPO had clearly sent a message to Vorster by doing so. SWAPO wanted there to be no misunderstanding that Walvis Bay belonged to Namibia. Giving more power to SWAPO, only three months later in August, SWAPO established their official constitution written out for the world. They proclaimed their organization as such: “[SWAPO] is thus the expression and embodiment of national unity, of a whole people united and organized in the struggle for total independence and social liberation.”⁶⁴

SWAPO’s constitution credits much of their success and power to their fight for independence and attacking South African labor systems established in Namibia:

Since the system of contract labour has been and continues to be one of the most blatant manifestations of colonial oppression and exploitation in Namibia, it was felt essential to initially root the movement in the workers' section of the population. This close historic identification of our movement with the interests of the toiling masses of the Namibian people is one of the main factors which explain the resilience of our movement when

⁶³ Kelso, 7.

⁶⁴ “Constitution of the South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO) of Namibia,” 2.

compared to other anti-colonial groups which had emerged in Namibia and have either collapsed or remained paper organizations.⁶⁵

The central idea of a socialist organization built upon ideals for workers' rights and thus directly attacks the apartheid labor system established in Namibia. This is also why SWAPO established a branch in Walvis Bay, an industrial area and an area of Namibia focused of industry and labor:

[...]the issue of rooting SWAPO firmly in the Namibian society came thus to be the main task during the early half of 1960's. To this end, steps were taken to establish branches in different parts of the country, especially in the industrial areas of Windhoek, Otjiwarongo, Tsumeb, Walvis Bay, Luderitz Bay, and Oranjemund. ⁶⁶

As SWAPO wrote its constitution, South Africa was in crisis mode. Adding to a chain of protests, Sharpeville became just a starting point. In an episode of deja-vu similar to Sharpeville, a peaceful but passionate protest turned deadly in Soweto, Johannesburg in June of 1976. Thousands of young students were resisting apartheid at their local schools. To meet the young protesters were South Africa police. Yet again, the police failed to calm down how the crowd as they planned and thus shot into it, killing 200 and wounding many more.⁶⁷

Amidst crisis in South Africa, the most critical change in policy toward Namibia occurred. Walvis Bay was officially transferred to be administered as a part of South Africa's Cape Province in mid-1977.⁶⁸ This transfer itself repealed the South West Africa Affairs Act of 1922, which stated that Walvis Bay would be administered as a part of South West Africa. Even among SWAPO's growing strength and international support and in the face of its own international crit-

⁶⁵ "Political Program of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) of Namibia," July 29-August 1, 1976, 36-37.

⁶⁶ Political Program of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) of Namibia, 36.

⁶⁷ "Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa: South Africa and Namibia," 92-94.

⁶⁸ Dreyer, 505-506.

icism, South Africa established the act to ensure that if Namibia was lost to SWAPO, Walvis Bay would remain under their control. They could claim Walvis Bay as an integral part of South Africa. This act was Pretoria's insurance on the apartheid government: "South Africa annexed this strategic port in 1977 to its Cape Province, more than 600 miles away from its borders, to create its own Guantanamo Bay."⁶⁹ Not only did this change keep Walvis Bay separate, but it gave more direct power over Walvis Bay to the apartheid government, thus increasing a lock-down on apartheid policies and general minority rule. Later on in the 1980s, Major of Walvis Bay Nico Retief would say, "I don't think anyone here had any idea Walvis Bay has a separate status."⁷⁰ In addition, Pretoria could continue to manipulate and control the rest of Namibia through Walvis Bay.

The UN General Assembly soon made a bold statement against South Africa's treatment of Namibia and Walvis Bay, as it deemed South Africa's hold on both illegal and even declared it was in international hands now. Resolution 32/9 of November 1977 declared Walvis Bay "an integral part of Namibia with which it is inextricably linked by geographical, historical, economic, cultural and ethnic bonds."⁷¹ The General Assembly claimed South Africa's hold over the port was a physical threat to Namibians as well as an economic threat that was inhibiting Namibia's own growth. This was the first specific discussion of Walvis Bay in the UN.⁷² Sam Nujoma used this newfound international interest as his opportunity to fight for a Namibia with Walvis Bay. To the UN Security Council, whom he saw as a guardian angel for self-determination, he appealed:

⁶⁹ Kelso, 2.

⁷⁰ Sparks, "Walvis Bay switches apartheid on and off."

⁷¹ "A/RES/32/9," *United Nations General Assembly*, November 4 1977. Also see Berat, 268.

⁷² Berat, 267.

“SWAPO therefore requests this Council to ensure, by committing to itself to expediting the immediate withdrawal of all enemy troops and administrative machinery from Walvis Bay, that it [is] speedily and unconditionally restored to Namibia.”⁷³

With frustration came some progress and hope for a Namibia with Walvis Bay, as UN Security Council Resolution 432 passed on July 27, 1978. This resolution would serve as proof that the international community cared and listened to the concerns of SWAPO and the Namibian people. The resolution stated that Walvis Bay would eventually be integrated with Namibia:

Taking note of paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 32/9 D of 4 November 1977, in which the Assembly declares that Walvis Bay is an integral part of Namibia, 1. Declares that the territorial integrity and unity of Namibia must be assured through the reintegration of Walvis Bay with in its territory;[...] Declares that, pending the attainment of this objective, South Africa must not use Walvis Bay in any manner prejudicial to the independence of Namibia or the viability of its economy;[...]⁷⁴

The resolution promised that the UN would contribute to process of reintegration and forbade South African use of Walvis Bay that could economically or physically hinder Namibian progress or integration.⁷⁵ The Western Contact Group, created by U.S. President Jimmy Carter to aid in Namibia’s independence progress, consisted of representatives for the USA, France, Canada, United Kingdom, and Germany. All five approved of the resolution, further proving how the international community reacted to the Walvis Bay dispute in support of integration.

With great progress comes great opposition. Prime Minister Vorster spat at Resolution 432, saying only two days after its passing, “the decision has no force or law [...] only a decision of the South African Parliament can bring about a change in the status and possession of the

⁷³ Berat, 268.

⁷⁴ “Resolution 432,” July 1978.

⁷⁵ “Resolution 432,” July 1978.

[Walvis Bay] territory.” Seeing the resolution as invalid, South Africa rejected it. Meanwhile, South Africa was trying to keep as much control as possible not only over Walvis Bay but the rest of Namibia by trying to reform apartheid policies. After rejecting Resolution 432, South African officials decided to hold the first universal suffrage elections for South West Africa’s international representatives in the South African Parliament, excluding SWAPO, in defiance of the UN General Assembly’s 1972 recognition of SWAPO as the “sole representative of Namibia’s people.”⁷⁶ SWAPO prided itself on being a representative for independent people of Namibia, and the international community began accepting them as such in the 1970s. But to the apartheid government, SWAPO was nothing short of evil:

South Africa announced that elections would take place in the Territory for the purpose of establishing beyond doubt who had the right to speak for the people of SWA/Namibia. SWAPO meanwhile continued to commit acts of terror in SWA/Namibia while purporting to be the sole authentic representative of the people of SWA/Namibia.⁷⁷

The UN did not recognize these elections, which would give control back to South Africa by making it look as though these elections were fair when in coincidence their preferred party won, the Tunhalle Alliance. This invalid election would allow South Africa to have power and control over Namibia and Walvis Bay.⁷⁸

It is important to note that Resolution 432 did not state that the integration *had to happen immediately* once Namibia gained independence. This vagueness on the timeline would

⁷⁶ Theo-Ben Gurirab, “The genesis of the Namibian Constitution: The international and regional setting,” *Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*, 112-113, http://www.kas.de/upload/auslandshomepages/namibia/constitution_2010/gurirab.pdf.

⁷⁷ *South Africa: 1979 The Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa*, ed. Information Service of South Africa, (Pretoria: Chris van Rensburg Publications), 61-62.

⁷⁸ Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa 1976-1991*, 180-182.

be an issue SWAPO would face. Reluctantly agreeing to take out the Walvis Bay compromise in Resolution 432, the next major UN Security Council statement on Namibia, Resolution 435 of September 29, 1978, was born. Resolution 435 laid out a plan for Namibia's independence, calling for an end to war and a set-up for UN-supervised elections. Quick to deny the resolution, South Africa stated it would not accept the deal unless it included that Cuban troops occupying Angola had to leave.⁷⁹ Cold War tensions were high, and the risk of SWAPO winning that free election guaranteed by 435 was very probable. The U.S. strongly supported 435 in an attempt to ease tensions and cut off growing Marxist ideals in southern Africa.

Resolution 435 failed to mention Walvis Bay.⁸⁰ Why? Over the summer, Nujoma and SWAPO began to recede and make sacrifices in the name of Namibian independence, facing South Africa's brush-offs to the international community on Walvis Bay. This meant they were willing to table the discussion of Walvis Bay for the time being if it was going to cost Namibia its independence. As opposed to remaining stubborn on only allowing Namibia and Walvis Bay to be considered as one in terms of independence, SWAPO ended up allowing for Resolution 435 to specifically leave out Walvis Bay after dealing with outside pressure. While Nujoma famously, on many occasions in the past and the coming future, made claims that SWAPO would stand for Walvis Bay to be excluded from Namibian independence, he was coerced by fellow supporters to accept Resolution 435 without Walvis Bay. U.S. representative in the Contact Group, Ambassador McHenry, had said, "We told SWAPO: you got 99 percent-why hold up agreement for 1

⁷⁹ Simon, 511.

⁸⁰ Berat, 269.

percent?”⁸¹ Even President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, the country to which SWAPO was exiled, had said to Nujoma that “on Walvis Bay he should follow the example of the Cubans, who tolerate the existence of Guantanamo on their territory.”⁸² But as SWAPO and South Africa knew, this was a critical part and key access point to rest of Namibia. International lenience on Walvis Bay during Namibian independence talks was a major flaw. Whether the two were separated by political lines or not, the two would always be intertwined economically and politically. While outsiders may have seen Resolution 435 as a huge opportunity, which it was of course, it was a huge risk for SWAPO to leave vague the post-independence status of its only deep-water port. As Jorge Risquet, a famous Cuban communist leader, had said in regard to the attitude towards Resolution 435:

The racists will remain in Walvis Bay for a long time, for as long as their ignoble system of apartheid endures. SWAPO made this concession [on Walvis Bay] because it was alleged that otherwise the negotiations [over Namibia] would not advance. But what did we gain in return? That was five years ago, and since then the negotiations have not progressed one inch, and the issue of Walvis Bay has been cast aside. It is considered a *fait accompli*, a lost cause.⁸³

The 1970s ended with South Africa, its apartheid system, and white power still in control, even as plans for a negotiated independence began. The UN saw SWAPO as a serious leader and took it seriously, but South Africa still got what it wanted, through negotiation, which was to remain in control of Walvis Bay: “The late 1970s and early 1980s in Namibia may thus be characterized as part of the inevitable transition between the end of colonialism and the beginning of

⁸¹ Gleijeses, 146.

⁸² Gleijeses, 146.

⁸³ Gleijeses, 211.

independence.”⁸⁴ Despite international support for SWAPO and Namibia’s independence, Cold War tensions of the coming Reagan administration and continued Cuban presence in Angola would delay the resolution of Walvis Bay’s status.

Southern Africa in the Cold: the 1980s

For much of the progress made by SWAPO and the international community in the name of Walvis Bay and Namibia as a whole in the 1970s, the 1980s represent a time for some setbacks due to the Cold War. As scholar Pier Gleijeses said, “[Walvis Bay] was, throughout the 1980s, a major reason that the Cuban troops remained in Angola, and it was an important battleground of the Cold War.”⁸⁵ The Reagan administration classically is known for crackdowns and taking a more conservative stance on Cold War policies, following the more liberal and United Nations-focused Carter administration. This gave SWAPO’s plans a new challenge in that Reagan would actively support South Africa in the southern African fight against hard core anti-communists and extremely left groups like the ANC and SWAPO. The Cold War would determine the status of Walvis Bay and how long apartheid would last in a modern Africa of self-termination.

With Namibian independence gearing towards a SWAPO leadership, this brought up concerns about yet another socialist party gaining power in Africa. The Reagan administration indirectly supported apartheid, and more so supported South Africa’s fight against these African socialist movements rather than their internal policies. It is not to be mistaken that Reagan personally approved of apartheid or similar racist systems in Africa. The intense fear of communism’s

⁸⁴ Simon, 508.

⁸⁵ Gleijeses, 146.

global spread and Cuban and Soviet influence around the world was enough so that the Reagan administration and U.S. officials could justify supporting South Africa in the sense of supporting capitalism, which was believed to be more democratic and free than communism or socialism. U.S Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker famously, in a conversation with South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha, had tried to ease Botha's concerns that the U.S. was falling short of support for South African policies. In response, Crocker had said that "[the] present Administration would have more of a backbone in the face of pressure than the previous one."⁸⁶

On the Walvis Bay issue, he exhibited a hands up position and on the down low supported South Africa by claiming the Walvis Bay issue could *only* be solved by a future Namibia and South Africa.⁸⁷ The Reagan administration was classically known for supporting dictators and oppressive leaders, especially in Africa and Latin America, in order to prevent any socialist leader from gaining power. So, for the administration to provide South Africa support, it overlooked the negatives about internal policies like apartheid in order to fight communism and especially Cuba's strong influence in southern Africa. Notably, Cuba and Fidel Castro were major supporters of SWAPO and the MPLA and provided the two groups with massive support in their armed struggle against the SADF.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ "Memorandum of Conversation Between R. F. Botha and Chester Crocker of the US Department of State: April 15, 1981." 1.

⁸⁷ Berat, 269.

⁸⁸ Isaac Saney, "African Stalingrad: The Cuban Revolution, Internationalism, and the End of Apartheid." *Latin American Perspectives* 33, no. 5 (2006): 105. <http://www.jstor.org.libserv-prd.bridgew.edu/stable/27647962>.

The key difference in the transition from the Carter administration's attitude towards Walvis Bay compared to the Reagan administration's attitude was the amount of support given to South Africa. The Carter administration remained "ambiguous"⁸⁹ and chose to be seen as remaining open to how the Walvis Bay issue should be resolved, while making it clear to South Africa that although the Walvis Bay issue was being tabled it was always an integral part of Namibia. On the other hand, Chester Crocker made it clear in 1981 that the issue of Walvis Bay was to be discussed by South Africa and an independent Namibia, only on terms that understood Walvis Bay as property of South Africa.⁹⁰

Choosing to remain oblivious to the growing possibility of being overthrown and continuing to pretend that international law did not always apply to them if it disagreed with their policies, South Africa announced yet again to expand their military base at Walvis Bay in 1984. By 1989, the country had poured the equivalent of anywhere from \$9-13 million dollars into expanding and updating the military installations for SADF, therefore ensuring their strategic power in the exclave.⁹¹ This sent a clear message to their opposition: Walvis Bay is rightfully ours to do what we please with it and we will take every measure to ensure it stays that way. In addition, this move would be a symbolic threat and statement that South Africa was preparing to remain in combat if need to protect itself and by extension, Walvis Bay, from SWAPO, communism and apartheid's death.

⁸⁹ Gleijeses, 180.

⁹⁰ Berat, 269.

⁹¹ Evans, 559-560.

Continuing to dig their place in the sand, South Africa's Walvis Bay was economically succeeding and proving itself as a possibility for economic prosperity. South Africa was in control of five major ports in southern Africa at the time including Walvis Bay. By 1983, the majority of Walvis Bay's fish and ore exports were being controlled by South Africa. This success was largely due to other South African projects in Walvis Bay, the main ones being the South African Railways and the Harbor Authority. The two groups began an expansion project at the port in 1981 to allow the area to take on more tankers and large freights, thus allowing for more money to flow in and out of the port and into South Africa.⁹² The railway system was especially crucial as it connected Walvis Bay to inland Namibia and into South Africa, making imports and exports more accessible and easily profitable. Walvis Bay was often described as "the key" to southern Africa:

It is jealously eyed by landlocked southern African states, like Zimbabwe and Malawi, which are dependent on eastern ports like Beira and Maputo in Mozambique. If Namibia controlled Walvis Bay, those states would have a three-week advantage in exports to Western Europe.⁹³

These economic and militaristic projects gave South African a leg up in the struggle for Walvis Bay. They could now say that due to South African control of the port, Walvis Bay was economically proving its potential and thus the best leadership for Walvis Bay was status quo. The expansion of these projects were more examples of how South Africa was desperately disobeying the laws established by the General Assembly in order to keep their gem, Walvis Bay. This did not mean much to the Namibians and people of Walvis Bay. As Sam Nujoma quoted in his autobiography, "we will never be wooed by roads, hospitals, schools and so forth, as long as

⁹² Evans, 560.

⁹³ Battersby, 1990.

South Africa remains on Namibian soil.”⁹⁴ It is not only awkward in the sense that Walvis Bay geographically fits into Namibia, but also thinking that the workers on site of these massive projects funded by the South African government were primarily black Namibians, living in a segregated society.⁹⁵

South African Prime Minister P.W. Botha sought American support for his country against the Cubans and African liberation forces like SWAPO, while also asking them to butt-out of matters within South Africa’s four provinces (including Walvis Bay, as part of the Cape Province.) In a letter to Secretary of State Alexander Haig in 1981, Botha hoped for “the normalization of South Africa’s relations with the United States and respect for South Africa’s rights as a sovereign state.”⁹⁶ It is by no mistake that the lifetime of apartheid and the length of the Cold War are almost identical. The apartheid government was strongly anti-communist, treating liberation movements like SWAPO as fronts for a “total onslaught,” an idea that any resistance towards the apartheid government was “part of a campaign orchestrated by Moscow against the Western world.”⁹⁷ When apartheid leaders received criticism, many believed it was a Cold War

⁹⁴ Nujoma, 209.

⁹⁵ Kelso, 9.

⁹⁶ “Letter from South African Minister of Foreign Affairs R.F. Botha to US Secretary of State A.M. Haig Jr.,” *Wilson Center: Digital Archive International History Declassified*, May 1981, 1, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118260>.

⁹⁷ Jamie Miller, “Apartheid South Africa and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire,” *Wilson Center Archives*, Nov. 7, 2016, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/apartheid-south-africa-and-the-collapse-the-portuguese-empire>.

plot. P.W. Botha once said that “the free world wants to feed South Africa to the Red Crocodile [communism], to appease its hunger.”⁹⁸

The way the administration of Walvis Bay was strategically flipped and flopped around allowed South Africa to treat SWAPO in South West Africa as a foreign threat to the anti-communist integrity of southern Africa, from which they had to guard Walvis Bay as part of South Africa. Once the MPLA and Angola achieved independence, SWAPO and MPLA, with Cuban assistance, worked closely together to help achieve Namibian independence by allowing SWAPO to set up bases and refugee camps close enough to the border to make South Africa tense. Fear of the already strong independence movements hitting African countries seemingly from one border to next moving, in a southward direction, South Africa held on to Walvis Bay in hopes that it would allow them to economically control even an independent Namibia, limiting the power of the socialist SWAPO government. While Namibia would be independent on paper, the country would still rely on its only valuable port for economic and strategic assistance. This would not only give them more power but also a thicker “border,” in a sense, against communist inspired independence movements like MPLA, without which the country would be more vulnerable.

Finalizations and Freedom: The 1990s

In February of 1990, state president F. W. de Klerk made a speech suggesting drastic changes to the country in the coming months. In this speech, he unbanned the African National Congress and other anti-apartheid and communist groups, motioned for the release of Nelson

⁹⁸ Sarah Britten, “The Art of the South African Insult,” *30 Degrees South Publishers*, 2006, 100, https://books.google.com/books?id=sZTLigR2t5UC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Mandela, and called for the end of apartheid.⁹⁹ No longer able to ignore international laws, international recognition for SWAPO's role in Namibia, and its own internal liberation movements and conflicts eating away at the apartheid system, South Africa began to wear down, while still desperately trying to buy time for Walvis Bay. Due to the U.S. buying time mostly because of Cuban presence in Angola, South Africa finagled and continued to keep Walvis Bay under its administration through the idea of a future negotiation, even when it was now inevitable that free elections would be held in Namibia and that SWAPO would take the official title.

Namibia joined the independent map of African countries in March 1990 through free, U.N supervised elections in the country. As predicted, SWAPO was voted in an overwhelming majority to run the free nation. March 21st, 1990 was specifically chosen as Namibia's independence day because it was the 30th anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre.¹⁰⁰ Walvis Bay's future was still up in the air as the Cape Province enjoyed control, under terms first set by Resolution 435 back in 1978.¹⁰¹ Military expansion in Walvis Bay continued by the South African government, suggesting this new independence had little to no effect on their position of Walvis Bay. There was a period of awkwardness in the region and also on an international level. Now that Namibia had its independence, what was going to happen to Walvis Bay? And with these conversations, South Africa gave little leeway on its position even after the SWAPO victory. During this

⁹⁹ "F. W. de Klerk's speech at the opening of Parliament, 2 February 1990," *The Nelson Mandela Foundation*, <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/031v02039/041v02103/051v02104/061v02105.htm>.

¹⁰⁰ Christopher Wren, "Namibia Achieves Independence After 75 Years of Pretoria's Rule," *New York Times*, March 21, 1990.

¹⁰¹ See Appendix C

lull period, American observer Casey Kelso wrote: “Walvis Bay can be considered the last surviving artifact of an earlier era of colonial divide-and-rule.”¹⁰²

However, by September of the same year, the apartheid government had begun to demilitarize the port, suggesting an abrupt change of heart. Eventually, it became clear that Pretoria would be open to discussion on the port, rather than taking its traditional hardline position on it only being in South African hands. Namibia’s foreign minister Theo Ben-Gurirab said at the time: “The general view expressed by others is that Pretoria would want to agree on an interim period of joint administration.”¹⁰³ SWAPO and South African officials began secret talks about possible joint administration. A participant in these talks, Wilfried Emvula, then the director of the Legal Assistance Centre in Walvis Bay and notably the only black person allowed in the talks, suggested that the talks were secret as South Africa’s way of keeping the information from the white public: “The secrecy is to allow South Africa to compromise in private while over time preparing the white public to accept such a move.” Emvula also said, “They keep the talks secret so as not to embarrass voters, because at first the government said they would never, never negotiate on Walvis Bay.”¹⁰⁴

By 1992, with internal pressure rising, the Namibian government and the South African government signed an agreement to joint-administration in Walvis Bay. The process of beginning to turn over Walvis Bay back to Namibia was a drawn-out decision, but a decision UN representative and Namibia’s counselor, Selma Ashipala, thought was absolutely necessary as long as it

¹⁰² Kelso, 2.

¹⁰³ Battersby, 1990.

¹⁰⁴ Kelso, 10-11.

occurred. Ashipala told reporters that the decision to finally turn over Walvis Bay was “a prelude to the ‘total decolonization’ of South Africa itself.”¹⁰⁵ However, some people of Walvis Bay disagreed and saw joint-administration as a way of buying apartheid time to disguise itself enough to look like a free, democratic, and equal society for the international community while actually governing in very apartheid-like ways. In his letters back to the United States, Casey Kelso writes about his conversations with George Gavanga, who was at the time a branch educator for the Namibia Food and Allied Workers Union. Gavanga mentioned his distain for the joint-administration idea:

“Apartheid is always there, apartheid is not something which dies in a day, it takes decades,” Gavanga said. “Here [Walvis Bay] it has not even yet started to die it is still alive.” Most Namibians in Walvis Bay don’t understand why it’s taking so long for the enclave to be reunited with Namibia, according to Gavanga. Joint administration is just a delaying tactic by South Africa to prolong discussions and create confusion, he said. “It’s not necessary for Walvis Bay to have a joint administration, it should be administered by Namibia, [for] it is part of Namibia.”¹⁰⁶

By 1993, South African officials one week made claims that Walvis Bay undoubtedly belonged to South Africa, to the next week fully giving up on the exclave and working on negotiations with SWAPO. This major flip flop of attitudes caught the world’s eyes. As after over eighty years in the exclave and the amount of work and declarations the South African governments went through to declare that Walvis Bay was theirs, they gave it up. One spokesperson for the

¹⁰⁵ “Namibia,” *Africa Report* 38, no. 5: 7, 1993, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 2, 2017).

¹⁰⁶ Kelso, 10-11.

far-right South African Conservative Party called this quick decision a “sell out” to the ANC and communism.¹⁰⁷

It was little accident that the success of regaining Walvis Bay primarily was done on South Africa’s terms. While negotiating and giving up the port was part of the deal, the Transfer of Walvis Bay Act of 1993 presents a clear picture that the South African government was still calling the shots. On January 28th of that same year, a few months before the official transfer by SWAPO and South Africa, a document from the office of State President F. W. de Klerk was published concerning the status of Walvis Bay. It states: “Walvis Bay shall be transferred to Namibia with effect from 1 March 1994 or such other date as may be agreed upon by the Governments (of Namibia and South Africa.) [...] The State President may in any such law amend or repeal any legal provision, including any Act of Parliament.”¹⁰⁸ While the South African government was turning over its most desired port, F.W. de Klerk’s was *still* reminding the people of Namibia and SWAPO that the possibility remained that he could take it all away and that this transfer was under his own terms.

It was suddenly an anxious time to be a white person in southern Africa. This same document from F. W. de Klerk’s office assured people of Walvis Bay with South African citizenship that they could maintain that citizenship after the transfer:

[...]any person who is ordinarily resident in Walvis Bay and who immediately prior to the date of transfer was a South African citizen and elects to retain South African citizenship, shall continue to be a South African citi-

¹⁰⁷ John Carlin, “Pretoria to quit Walvis Bay: Multi-party body's policy breakthrough,” *The Independent*, August 1993, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/pretoria-to-quit-walvis-bay-multi-party-bodys-policy-breakthrough-1461805.html#commentsDiv>.

¹⁰⁸ “NO. 203 OF 1993: Transfer of Walvis Bay to Namibia Act, 1993: State President’s Office,” January 28, 1994.

zen after that date, and such a person shall continue to be entitled to reside in Walvis Bay.[...] ¹⁰⁹

The President's move was to ensure the safety of white South African people, while claiming its remaining power in the southern African region.

The construction of the 1993 agreements for Walvis Bay's "reintegration" or "incorporation" into Namibia would soon follow, with some proof of more negotiation and discussion among the South Africa and SWAPO governments. Properly done at Walvis Bay, the treaty officially documented a final settlement on where Walvis Bay's home was in southern Africa. After years of grueling arguments, battling, and ignoring each other, the two countries were able to come together and reestablish Walvis Bay within Namibia, where it properly belonged. However, the document still reveals a bit of tension in the situation: "Walvis Bay shall be incorporated/reintegrated into the Republic of Namibia on 1 March 1994."¹¹⁰ The word choice reveals a lot about the history of Walvis Bay, suggesting some active resistance on South Africa's part even in the midst of transfer. For SWAPO, and to the international community, Walvis Bay was being reintegrated into its natural country. For South African officials, it was to be newly incorporated into Namibia and being taken from South Africa.

President Sam Nujoma and many other important political African figures and citizens watched with wide eyes at the reintegration ceremony of Walvis Bay on March 1, 1994, only a month before South Africa would hold its first democratic elections. Slowly, the crowds gazed upon a South African Defense Force official step onto the field alongside a Namibian naval rep-

¹⁰⁹ "NO. 203 OF 1993: Transfer of Walvis Bay to Namibia Act, 1993: State President's Office," January 28, 1994.

¹¹⁰ "Treaty between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of the Republic of Namibia with respect to Walvis Bay and the off-shore Islands," February 28, 1994.

representative. The crowd cheered as the blue, orange, and white striped apartheid flag slid down the pole towards the ground. Seconds later it was being replaced by the Namibian flag of green, red, and blue with a fitting sun symbol in the corner. The ceremony was completed with fireworks and more celebrations.¹¹¹ Resolution 432 was then officially fulfilled, much to the delight of the international community.¹¹² Decolonization and apartheid were finally coming to a rightful end. This celebration was truly Namibia's official and full independence.¹¹³ Finally, the fight for Walvis Bay was completed and SWAPO and Sam Nujoma were able to look back upon their journey and pat themselves on the back for never giving up on Walvis Bay.

One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Walvis Bay Today

History occasionally will give you "happy endings." Walvis Bay in March 1994, like other African celebrations of decolonization, was what seemed like a happy ending. Sadly, when we look closer, happy endings become realities that reveal false hopes. Walvis Bay is no exception. It is not necessarily showing the prosperous potential it once did. For example, this once-thriving fishing industry in the port is now nearly extinct, as foreigners and corporations struggle for control of Namibia's mineral resources.

In 2014, the 20th anniversary of Walvis Bay's integration brought up a lot of reminiscing for current and past leaders of the country. Jerry Ekandjo, Namibia's Minister of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture, noted that Walvis Bay is a critical part of Namibia's economy and

¹¹¹ "Namibia/Walvis Bay-Namibia Reclaims Walvis Bay," *AP Archive*, March 1994, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uARV6dQZhFU&t=1s>.

¹¹² "Namibia," *U.S. Department of State*, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/namibia/6212.htm>.

¹¹³ See Appendix D

expressed gratitude to those who helped reintegrate it.¹¹⁴ However, at the anniversary it was clear that there was much tensions regarding SWAPO and those who run the government today and the Namibian people. Speaking towards their critics, SWAPO secretary general, Nangolo Mbumba, stated:

We are united, only a united country could achieve what we have achieved to build up the country. Therefore, as Namibians our business should be to unite all, provide education, health and basic necessities to our people. We should be grateful for Walvis Bay's 'independence' and should thank the founding father as without his character and determination we wouldn't have achieved independence,[...] Also do not fool yourselves about there being division in the SWAPO Party. We work together, plan together and we are going to the elections together.¹¹⁵

It would be difficult to pinpoint a problem, or rumored problem, within the SWAPO as Mbumba has suggested by looking at that same year's election results in Namibia. With a 70% voter turnout, SWAPO dominated in the elections winning 80% of the votes, as no viable opposition party has emerged to the liberation party.

So, what is happening in Walvis Bay exactly? China has now settled into Walvis Bay, and some may say that it is in some way taking South Africa's old place. Seeing the great potential in the port, a company owned by the Chinese government is pouring money into Walvis Bay for a port expansion "the size of 40 baseball fields."¹¹⁶ This could very well be because of the heavy amount of imports and exports Walvis Bay is beginning to see, due to Chinese presence. The Chinese government and different Chinese companies have already established or are starting other projects in the port or close by. Suddenly, new shopping centers, highways, fuel depots and

¹¹⁴ Eveline de Klerk, "Walvis marks 20 years of reintegration," *New Era*, April 2014, <https://www.newera.com.na/2014/04/07/walvis-marks-20-years-reintegration/>.

¹¹⁵ Eveline de Klerk, April 2014.

¹¹⁶ Larmer, "Is China the World's New Colonial Power?"

factories have popped up, all funded by the Chinese. Not far from the port, China General Nuclear has invested about \$4.6 billion into a project called the Husab Uranium Mine that will be the second largest uranium mine in the entire world. This project alone gave the Namibian government the prediction that is Chinese project will boost the economy by raising the gross domestic product by five percent. Most notably though, the uranium from the port will travel back and benefit China, helping the country play a major role as a global leader.¹¹⁷

With these new projects, money, and infrastructure coming into Namibia, many Namibians see great opportunities. However, more Namibians see the Chinese government as taking advantage of the country and its people's positions due to colonial history and especially Namibia's apartheid history. Too many see this as history repeating itself in Walvis Bay and some may say that the China is just one antagonist replacing another. However, that is a whole other story.

Conclusion

Walvis Bay was apartheid's last hope. While South Africa held onto Namibia as long as it could, again to help preserve apartheid, it knew it could not continue to keep it with SWAPOs growing power over the years. The manipulation of the administration of Walvis Bay clearly shows an attempt to keep something as their own. South Africa wanted to use Walvis Bay to preserve its own power. It is clear that South Africa saw and used Walvis Bay as a weapon against whatever was threatening their way of governing. It is fact that if apartheid continued through the 1990s and onward that South Africa would have a huge hold over Namibians and SWAPO as a government:

¹¹⁷ Larmer, "Is China the World's New Colonial Power?"

With eight deep-water berths, it is the fifth largest port in southern Africa and handles 90 percent of Namibia's exports. All of mineral-rich Namibia's shipments of nickel, copper, lead and uranium go through this port. Walvis Bay is also the center of Namibia's fishing industry, the second largest contributor to the economy after mining. And the massive oil storage tanks in the enclave hold 90 percent of Namibia's fuel supply. The country's economic security rests on foreign soil!¹¹⁸

While independence would ring in the country, Walvis Bay would be controlled by South Africans, leaving Namibians economically and by extension politically dependent on South Africa. A South African Walvis Bay would have just simply been a matter of rephrasing apartheid in southern Africa, to make it look like Namibia was truly independent from South Africa.

Apartheid officials wanted to make it look as though they were in full control of Walvis Bay's transfer, Namibia's independence, and the end of apartheid. In reality, South Africa was realizing that their system was soon to be expelled by the international community and African liberation movements. Walvis Bay's history reveals manipulation and the reality of decolonization. Africans still suffer from systemic hardships due to colonization's legacy. That legacy was too powerful for places like Walvis Bay and Namibia to overcome with a only grant of independence, making happy endings difficult to preserve. Even to this day, many Africans, like those in Namibia, are forced to pick up the pieces left behind by colonialism and apartheid.

¹¹⁸ Kelso, 8.

Appendix



A.) German South West Africa

(<https://media1.britannica.com/eb-media/38/128838-004-E72D49BD.jpg>)



B.) *South West Africa*

Political Cartoon of Louis Botha after Germany is forced to give up its colonies after WWI.

(<http://www.kaiserscross.com/40117/home.html>)



C.) *Namibia, 1990*

Map of railways, highways, and cities.

(<http://www.mapsland.com/africa/namibia/large-detailed-political-and-administrative-map-of-namibia-with-relief-roads-railroads-and-major-cities-1990>)



D.) Present Day Political Map of Namibia

(<http://www.nationsonline.org/maps/namibia-political-map.jpg>)

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