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# Moscow and the Namibia Peace Process

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## MOSCOW AND THE NAMIBIA PEACE PROCESS

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## SCOPE NOTE

This paper examines the origins and current status of Moscow's involvement in the Namibia question within a regional context. It focuses on the Soviet response to the present Contact Group initiative, as well as circumstances that might prompt new Soviet tactics over the next six to 12 months. The paper then discusses the USSR's options, its capabilities and constraints, and its probable reaction to a number of scenarios that might follow a settlement.

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

Moscow will seek to influence any negotiations on Namibia by pressuring the key African participants with whom it has close ties. If, however, the Frontline States, South Africa, and the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) were agreeable to a settlement, it is unlikely that Moscow could succeed in blocking it.

Moscow has become apprehensive about the current Contact Group initiative on Namibia, largely because of the potential repercussions on Soviet geopolitical interests in southern Africa, particularly Angola. Moscow views the US-backed initiative as an ill-disguised attempt to reverse the events of the mid-1970s. It would strongly resist a settlement that led to a major setback in Angola—particularly at the hands of a US administration that it perceives as challenging its position around the globe.

Moscow has to consider Angola and Namibia, however, not only in the perspective of its concerns and objectives in southern Africa but also in the context of its global interests. Thus, in making decisions about how best to preserve its position in Angola or how it can most effectively influence the outcome in Namibia, Moscow will have to weigh not only the importance of its interests in southern Africa, but also the impact of its moves on the USSR's worldwide concerns and particularly its bilateral relations with the United States.

Recent Soviet efforts to stall the negotiation process were probably prompted by continuing reports of a "package settlement" linking a Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola to a settlement in Namibia. From Moscow's viewpoint, such a withdrawal would presuppose a rapprochement between the opposing Angolan groups, the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the insurgent National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Taken together, these two developments would undermine the leverage and influence Moscow currently enjoys in Angola. We believe that a "package settlement"—even if accepted by Angola's MPLA regime—would be resisted by the USSR.

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The Soviets have already taken steps to impede the Contact Group initiative. These steps include propaganda and disinformation campaigns, bilateral discussions, and offers of military and economic assistance designed to push the key African players to oppose the negotiations. Moscow also is encouraging the Cubans to lobby on its behalf. Such moves demonstrate Moscow's potential for influencing the Namibia talks and its willingness to use its influence in defense of Soviet interests in the region.

If, however, a prospective Namibia settlement did not pose a major threat to their position in Angola, the Soviets would probably bend to African preferences for an accord rather than risk their credibility and equities by trying to destroy one. Even if the Soviets found an evolving settlement tolerable, they would nonetheless seek to fuel tensions and suspicions to ensure that the final accord was reached in an atmosphere of antagonism and distrust. Moscow would hope that, in such an environment, the new Namibian government would turn to the USSR for support.

While Moscow would prefer a settlement that brings an unrestricted, pro-Soviet regime to power in Namibia, the Soviets would probably accept considerably less in the belief that the basic South African-black African confrontation would continue to ensure the USSR of a major role in the region. Even a constrained SWAPO regime in Namibia might offer Moscow enhanced prospects for influence, although this would depend in large part on the broader environment.

In the event the Soviets perceived that a comprehensive "package settlement" appeared imminent they would probably try to destroy the prospective settlement. Moscow could pursue several courses of action—most of which are mutually exclusive. All entail risks, would antagonize the Frontline States, and might jeopardize Moscow's interests in the region. They include:

- Trying to provoke South Africa in hopes that Pretoria would react in ways that subsequently would scuttle a settlement. For example, Moscow might enlarge the Cuban troop presence in Mozambique.
- Promoting a regional crisis, such as a Shaba III—a new invasion of Zaire by the Angola-based rebels of the Front for the National Liberation of the Congo (FLNC).
- Threatening Angola with a significant reduction in military and economic assistance if it agreed to the settlement package.



- Offering to increase dramatically Moscow's security commitment and military involvement with the Frontline States in order to encourage the black Africans to back SWAPO in a long war and to assuage their fears of South African retaliation.
- Promoting a coup attempt by pro-Soviet elements within the MPLA against those Angolan leaders who support the settlement plan.

Other options may develop as the Namibia negotiations proceed. Moscow, for example, might seek to turn to its own advantage any differences that might emerge between Angola and SWAPO. Again, this would depend on the nature of the disagreement and the circumstances under which it arose.

Each of these Soviet options has inherent limitations and varying degrees of risk. To the extent that they require African involvement or acquiescence, Moscow does not enjoy unhindered freedom of action. A move to transfer a large Cuban combat force to Mozambique, for example, would require the approval of President Machel, who might not view it as serving Maputo's interests; he might well fear that such a move would prompt a significant military reaction from South Africa that over the long term could transform Mozambique into the "new Angola."

Similarly, if the MPLA had opted for a comprehensive Namibia settlement, Luanda would not support a Shaba III effort. While the Soviets could nonetheless attempt to instigate an FLNC invasion of Zaire, such action would antagonize Luanda and the other Frontline States and would not necessarily derail the prospective Namibian settlement.

A Soviet move to force Luanda to reject a settlement or face a significant reduction in aid would carry serious risks. Apart from revealing Moscow's complete disregard for Angolan sovereignty or priorities, an ultimatum might even prompt Luanda to downgrade ties with the USSR. Indeed, if the Angolans had taken the necessary "leap of faith" to accept a package settlement, they presumably would have considered the potential ramifications it would have for relations with Moscow. Much would depend on Soviet—and Angolan—readings of US willingness to assist Luanda after a settlement.

The Soviets might offer to increase substantially Moscow's security commitments to one or more of the Frontline States. The Africans, however, might view such an offer with some hesitation; the burdens of

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continuing the SWAPO insurgency and the potential South African reaction to greater Soviet involvement could deter them from accepting such an offer. The Frontline States, moreover, might question the Soviet offer in terms of its usefulness, Soviet intentions, and implications for the regional situation. The Soviets might even include an offer of limited air and naval combat forces, but we believe this is unlikely since it would run a major risk of military conflict with South Africa.

The Soviets might consider the risky option of promoting a coup by pro-Soviet elements within the MPLA. Such a move, however, would require the existence of a group that Moscow could count on—and which was willing to undertake a seizure of power. Recent reports of increased infighting within the MPLA may reflect Soviet efforts to offset the moderate policies of President dos Santos on such issues as Namibia and relations with the West. Given the murky nature of MPLA politics, and our limited, uncertain information about MPLA factionalism, it is difficult to assess the probability of a Soviet-inspired coup attempt. Should Moscow decide to pursue this option, a failed attempt could lead to the removal of the Soviets.

Although all of these options carry risks, the USSR may believe that the threat to its regional, geopolitical interests posed by a package settlement justifies taking them. The Soviets still see Angola as their major entree into the region and as a point for further expansion of their influence.

If the Contact Group initiative succeeds, US and other Western influence would be enhanced as it was in the case of Zimbabwe. In the short term, the settlement would undercut the Soviet goal of supplanting that influence.

A settlement, however, could also heighten black African expectations of the United States and the West generally, particularly in the economic sphere. Washington, for example, might come under pressure to push harder for changes in Pretoria's racial practices and to increase its practical commitment to regional economic development. Following a settlement, Moscow would work to increase its influence by wooing the new Namibian government and by promoting regional tensions and exploiting Frontline security fears.

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## DISCUSSION

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Context of the Namibia Problem

1. The Namibian conflict dates back to the 1870s when German and British interests clashed in this area. In the late 1870s Great Britain annexed the territory around Walvis Bay, which is a part of South Africa's Cape Province. During the period 1884-92, Germany expanded its portion of the territory to its present boundaries. With the outbreak of World War I, Germany's colonial empire was vulnerable, and British and South African troops invaded the territory in 1915. With the end of the war and the creation of the League of Nations, South-West Africa was awarded to South Africa in 1920 as a League of Nations Class C mandate (to be administered as an integral part of the governing state). The issue has been a contentious one since 1946.

2. South Africa maintained that with the demise of the League of Nations it had no obligation to the UN Trusteeship Council although it continued to provide "reports" on South-West Africa to that body in a spirit of "good will." The controversy became more heated when South Africa began to institute the system of apartheid in the territory. The UN General Assembly's 1966 decision to revoke South Africa's mandate over Namibia was decreed legally correct by the International Court of Justice in 1971. The UN formally adopted the name Namibia for the territory in 1972. In 1973, the UN named a Commissioner for Namibia and the General Assembly recognized SWAPO (South-West Africa People's Organization) as the sole, legitimate representative of the Namibian people.

3. Subsequent efforts to reach an internationally acceptable settlement have been unsuccessful. In 1975-77 the South African Government concluded a series of negotiations (the Turnhalle Conference) leading to a constitutional structure for Namibia. These talks led to the 1978 elections which brought the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) to a semblance of power. This internal government has not been recognized internationally.

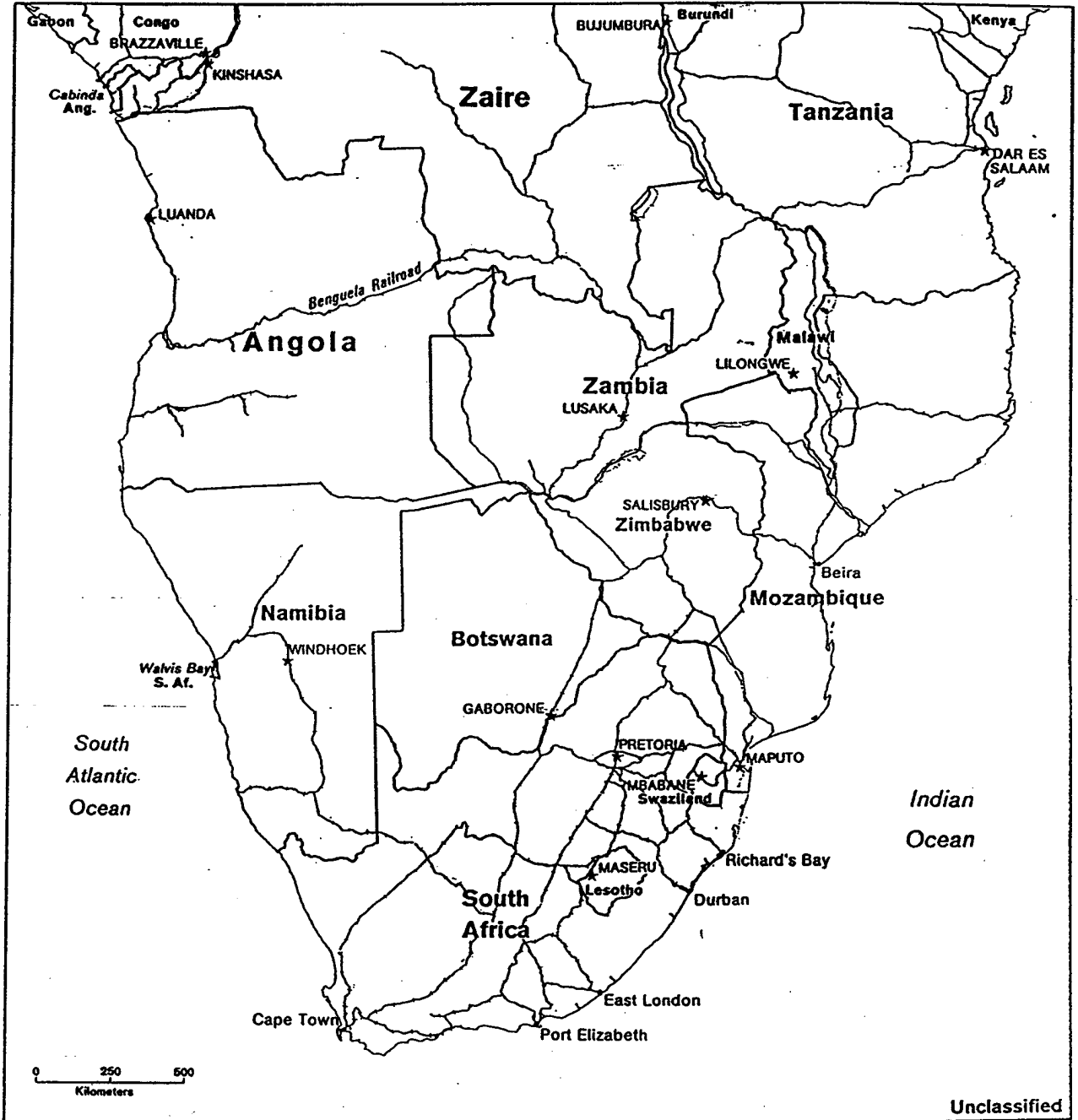
4. The present series of negotiations is an extension of those begun in 1977. Among the current players are the Western Five (the United States, the UK, the FRG, France, and Canada) known as the Contact Group, the South African Government, the internal political parties in Namibia, SWAPO, and the Frontline States (Angola, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana, and, since 1980, Zimbabwe). The negotiations are extremely complex and are divided into three phases, each of which involves bilateral as well as multilateral approaches. The first phase consists of defining an acceptable group of constitutional principles, and a system for electing delegates to a constituent assembly. The current initiative proposes to model this assembly on the West German system, with one-half chosen by proportional representation of parties and the other half elected directly. The objective of the constitutional principles is a free, democratic system in which the rights and property of all will be protected. SWAPO has rejected the proposed electoral system on the grounds that it is too complex to be easily understood by the electorate.

5. Some elements of Phase II are now being discussed; the issues may be more complex and more difficult than those of Phase I. Chief among these are the role of the UN and the composition and parameters of the UNTAG (UN Transition Assistance Group), which would include civilian and military personnel, led by a UN special representative who would supervise preparations for and the conduct of elections. The South African Government, which perceives a UN bias toward SWAPO, has insisted that the military component not exceed roughly 1,000 on the grounds that a greater number would influence the electorate in favor of SWAPO. Phase III would be the implementation of the plan, culminating in elections.

#### B. The Soviet Record on Namibia

6. Since at least the mid-1970s, the Soviets have seen Namibian independence as an integral part of the liberation struggle that they hope will eventually lead

**Southern Africa**



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to the establishment of black majority rule and governments favorably disposed toward the USSR throughout southern Africa. The Soviets have supported SWAPO since the early 1960s and have intensified their efforts since the collapse of the Portuguese Empire in 1974. Not surprisingly, the Soviets supported the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 366 in December 1974 which gave South Africa six months to withdraw from Namibia and relinquish power to the inhabitants of Namibia under UN supervision. Until recently, this has been the basis of the Soviet position toward Namibia, and Moscow has pointed to it to support its case against Pretoria and, by implication, the Western Contact Group.

7. South Africa's refusal to abide by Resolution 366 and its military operations in Angola during late 1975 and early 1976 led the Security Council to set a new deadline for withdrawal in August 1976. The Soviets supported this, and as the deadline drew nigh the Soviet media castigated Pretoria's efforts to use the Turnhalle Conference, established in September 1975, to legitimize South Africa's hold on Namibia.

8. In August 1976 the South Africans announced their intention to form an interim government around the Turnhalle group that would oversee a transition to independence. During a subsequent visit to Moscow, the Soviets apparently promised SWAPO President Nujoma additional military aid in hopes of stiffening his resistance to any negotiations. Despite SWAPO's growing dependence upon Soviet military support, Moscow's admonitions had little effect. In the spring of 1977, Nujoma evidently rejected Soviet advice to concentrate on a military solution of the Namibia problem and entered into a yearlong round of discussions with the Western Five which resulted in UN Security Council Resolution 435 of July 1978.<sup>1</sup>

9. Moscow was openly critical of Resolution 435 and privately lobbied against passage arguing that it did not transfer power to SWAPO. Moscow did not vote against it, however. Rather, in deference to African backing for the resolution, the USSR and Czechoslovakia abstained in the Security Council vote. Both the Soviets and Czechs made it clear, however, that they would not help fund UNTAG, established to

<sup>1</sup> UN 435 calls for a cease-fire, a phased withdrawal of South African forces, and the establishment of a UN force to oversee preparations for Namibian elections.

supervise the transfer of power from South Africa to the new Namibian government. Instead the Soviets argued that all costs be borne by those countries that "propose maintaining South African forces in Namibia," that is, the Western Contact Group.

10. For the next three years, the Soviet position on Namibia was fairly constant. While arguing that they favored a peaceful settlement and would not stand in the way of Western efforts to achieve one, the Soviets repeatedly questioned the Western Five's willingness to apply the necessary pressure on Pretoria to ensure a settlement. At the same time, Moscow was quick to note what it characterized as South African intransigence and duplicity. Moscow's goal was to convince the Frontline and SWAPO of the futility of the Western plan in order to get them to withdraw their cooperation. In the wake of the Rhodesian settlement in 1980, Moscow redoubled its efforts on Namibia lest the West be given another diplomatic victory.

11. The Soviet position began to shift after the failure of the January 1981 Geneva conference. In March the Soviets indicated that they might be willing to support Resolution 435. Several factors probably influenced Moscow's change of heart. The Soviets evidently hoped that by supporting the resolution they could embarrass the new US administration, which had just raised new reservations about UN 435. Thus, if negotiations failed, Moscow would be squarely on the side of the Africans and could lobby for sanctions against Pretoria, which would put the United States in an all-but-untenable position. Second, the Soviets no doubt recognized that the Frontline States and SWAPO were still interested in a settlement. They may have calculated that adoption of UN 435 at least meant UN and, thus, potential Soviet participation. Third, Moscow may have become more confident than earlier that SWAPO could win UN-sponsored elections. Finally, the Soviets may have been betting that South Africa would wreck future negotiations. The Soviets officially endorsed UN 435 in November 1981.

#### Moscow and SWAPO

12. Since the mid-1970s, the USSR has been the main supplier of arms for SWAPO. Soviet deliveries have included small arms and ammunition, mortars, rocket launchers, SA-7 surface-to-air missiles, and some trucks and armored personnel vehicles. The

equipment is passed to SWAPO through Angola. In addition, the Soviets have provided advanced military training to SWAPO cadres in the USSR, and some Soviet as well as Cuban and East German advisers apparently are assigned to SWAPO forces in Angola.

13: As a result of its military assistance, Moscow has gained considerable—but not dominant—influence within SWAPO. As its attempts to dissuade SWAPO from participating in negotiations show, the Soviets have had little success in dictating policy to SWAPO. Not surprisingly, the Soviets and their allies have developed close ties to SWAPO's military leaders. Cubans and Soviets advise SWAPO on strategy for conducting cross-border operations in Namibia. They do not, however, appear involved in actual combat operations.

14. Over the last two years, the Soviets may have gained additional influence with SWAPO's political leadership. The Soviets have provided ideological and political training for SWAPO cadres [

] In turn, SWAPO delegations have attended the last two Soviet Communist Party congresses.

## II. MOSCOW AND THE PRESENT CONTACT GROUP INITIATIVE

15. The present Contact Group initiative has heightened Soviet suspicions because of continuing reports that a "settlement package," which includes the removal of Cuban troops from Angola and a reconciliation between the ruling MPLA and the UNITA insurgents there, is being seriously considered. The onset of a US-Angolan dialogue and the apparent reluctance of SWAPO and other Frontline States to divulge all the details of the negotiations have reinforced Moscow's suspicions. While some of their concerns may be exaggerated, the Soviets are worried about what they perceive as:

- A new willingness on the part of Angola's MPLA regime to discuss Angolan issues in the framework of a Namibia settlement.
- Sustained SWAPO and Frontline interest in a negotiated settlement.
- SWAPO's weakened capability to conduct an effective insurgency following the stepped-up South African military activity.

— A new US initiative and a new US administration that may be capable of bringing Pretoria into a settlement.

### A. Angola

16. Moscow's greatest concern at this time is the potential impact of a settlement on Soviet interests in Angola. US efforts to include the Cuban troop issue and an MPLA-UNITA reconciliation into a broad package have convinced Moscow that the Contact Group initiative is aimed at diminishing Soviet influence in Angola. Soviet sensitivity on this point has been manifested in both public and private comments condemning attempts to link a Namibia solution to the internal affairs of Angola. Even a Namibia settlement not linked to a Cuban troop withdrawal makes Moscow uneasy; Angola's improved security situation following a settlement might diminish Luanda's dependence on Soviet aid.

### B. Namibia

17. Moscow recognizes that any settlement acceptable to Pretoria will probably require guarantees that Namibia not be transformed into a stalking-horse for the Soviets, the Cubans, or the African National Congress (ANC). If such guarantees were implemented and observed, the Soviet objective of establishing a pro-Soviet regime in Namibia would not be immediately realized. Nonetheless, the Soviets would view the establishment of a SWAPO-dominated government—even if "neutralized"—and the removal of South African forces from Namibia as steps that would enhance their influence in the region.

### C. Broader Concerns

18. Moscow is also apprehensive that a Namibia settlement could provide an opportunity for US and broader Western interests to be advanced in southern Africa at the expense of the USSR. A Western-brokered settlement could enhance US/Western prestige. As in the case of Zimbabwe, where Western-sponsored negotiations excluded the USSR, a settlement would highlight the usefulness of patient negotiations for the resolution of complex regional problems.

19. Although change in South Africa itself will remain an important issue on the regional agenda,

Moscow may believe that the Frontline States will shift their focus to problems of domestic economic development after Namibia is resolved. The Soviets may suspect that Frontline support of the South African insurgent movements will be tempered by the complex, long-term nature of the "final struggle" over apartheid in South Africa and the centrality of Pretoria to the region's overall economic well-being. Such constraints, as well as their serious economic problems, may make the Frontline States less susceptible to Soviet exploitation of "security fears" although much will depend on Pretoria's actions toward its neighbors. Given Moscow's poor track record in the area of economic assistance and development, the Soviets may see an African shift to economic priorities as a major opportunity for Western involvement and influence in the region.

20. The Soviets want to protect their geopolitical interests in southern Africa. Angola is central to those interests, serving as the main Soviet entree to the region and as a point for further expansion of Moscow's influence. Soviet naval ships call frequently in Luanda, where the Soviets station a support ship and maintain a naval communications facility. Access to naval air facilities in Angola also permits the USSR to use TU-95 Bear D maritime reconnaissance aircraft to monitor US naval traffic to and from the Indian Ocean.

21. Angola, moreover, is also a useful symbol of Moscow's superpower status and of its capability to project power and influence to distant shores. The Soviets view the US-backed initiative on Namibia as an ill-disguised attempt to reverse the events of the mid-1970s in Angola. In view of the heightened US-Soviet competition, Moscow would strongly resist a setback in Angola.

22. In the broader, global context of Soviet foreign policy interests, southern Africa has a lower priority than areas of more direct security concern, such as southwest Asia, Europe, or China. While Moscow would no doubt like to see a staunchly pro-Soviet regime in Namibia, it probably is willing to settle for considerably less on the grounds that Namibia is but a part of the larger southern African struggle and that the basic black African-South African confrontation will continue. The problem for Moscow is maintaining its influence in Angola and with the rest of the

Frontline States, whatever happens in Namibia, so as to be in a position to pursue its long-term regional objective of toppling the minority regime in Pretoria. From Moscow's perspective, this is a relatively low-risk proposition in the near term, since East-West military confrontation over southern Africa, let alone Namibia, is unlikely.

### III. INITIAL SOVIET COUNTERMOVES

23. Moscow was initially buoyed by the Reagan administration's enunciation of a policy of "constructive engagement" with South Africa. Black African criticism of that policy and the subsequent US effort to link a Namibia settlement to major change in Angola apparently convinced the Soviets that the present Contact Group initiative had little chance of succeeding. By late 1981, however, Soviet officials were saying that US policy in Namibia had become "more effective."

24. Soviet anxiety over the progress in the Namibia talks has prompted a variety of moves aimed at fueling African suspicions of the Contact Group—particularly the United States—and reinforcing Moscow's position in southern Africa. More specifically, these moves include stepped-up propaganda, disinformation, strengthening bilateral ties in the region, and lobbying key actors to back out of the negotiations. In addition, the Soviets had a hand in recent Cuban diplomatic activities designed to buttress the Cuban and Soviet position in southern Africa.

#### A. Propaganda and Disinformation

25. The noticeable increase in Soviet propaganda alleging US-South African "collusion" and "shared objectives" is aimed at diminishing Washington's credibility in Africa and as an objective broker in Namibia. Soviet propaganda linking the United States to the abortive coup in Seychelles, as well as to the South African-backed National Resistance Movement (NRM) in Mozambique serves to reinforce the theme of US-South African collaboration.

26. Moscow has made its most serious disinformation efforts on issues that directly impinge on key actors in the Namibia talks. For example, the disinformation operation alleging US training of UNITA forces in Zaire was clearly intended to raise doubts in

Luanda about US trustworthiness and to reemphasize Angola's dependence upon Soviet military assistance. Soviet-inspired disinformation also may have contributed to the decline in US-Zambian relations; Moscow probably hopes that Zambian fears of US subversion attempts will translate into greater skepticism of US negotiation efforts in Namibia.

### B. Reinforcing Moscow's Position

27. In a more direct approach to counter the Contact Group initiative, Moscow has reasserted its position in the region by buttressing its bilateral relationships and by pressing its clients to back away from the Western-backed talks on Namibia. Moscow has offered Angola additional military and economic assistance in hopes of inducing Luanda to resist Western pressure to accept the current Namibia proposal. In Zambia, and Botswana as well, the Soviets are attempting to strengthen new military assistance relationships in hopes of gaining further support for their position.

#### Angola

28. Since Angola is a key actor in any Namibia proposal—and one over which the Soviets have some leverage—Moscow has focused its efforts on dissuading Luanda from serious consideration of the Contact Group initiative. In an apparent effort to influence Angola's position on issues related to Namibia—including the diplomatic dialogue with the United States—the Soviets invited a high-level Angolan delegation to Moscow in mid-January.

29. During the Angolan delegation's visit,

the signing of an unprecedented economic package, which stipulates projects worth as much as \$2 billion over the next 10 years. The accord, as announced, does not specify how much, if any, new Soviet aid is involved. The timing and size of the offer strongly suggest that Moscow is trying to preempt any possible move to the West. A major economic commitment at this time would not only strengthen the position of pro-Soviet elements

within the MPLA, but would undermine those leaders who have criticized Moscow's perennially poor record in providing economic support. The Soviet offer may also be a carrot; complete fulfillment may depend on Angolan pursuit of foreign and domestic policies acceptable to Moscow.

30. In another effort to strengthen their hand, the Soviets used the Angolan visit to play up the delegation head, Lucio Lara, a reputed hardliner and number-two man in the MPLA. The publicity accorded Lara underscored the importance of the visit and seemed designed to signal Moscow's dissatisfaction with moderate elements within the MPLA. may reflect additional Soviet efforts to offset the policies of President dos Santos.

#### Mozambique

31. Moscow also is attempting to enlist Maputo in moves to scuttle the Contact Group talks.

32. These Soviet overtures were preceded by a number of high-level visits to Maputo: Soviet Politburo candidate Rashidov (mid-November 1981) and Yevgeniy Samoteykin, President Brezhnev's personal aide for Third World issues (mid-January 1982). During this time period, the Soviets also hosted Mozambican Defense Minister Chipande and organized ship visits to Mozambique.

33. The Soviets probably believe that Mozambique's need for military support against the South African-backed NRM insurgency will strengthen their hand with the Machel regime. While President Machel thus far has eschewed a disruptive role in Frontline discussions on Namibia, he may be compelled to promote Moscow's position on this issue if NRM activities force him to increase his dependence on Soviet military aid.

#### The Namibian Insurgents (SWAPO)

34. Moscow is also trying to exploit its position as SWAPO's main arms supplier in its efforts to under-



mine the Contact Group talks. [

] 35. Such urgings may be designed to strengthen those SWAPO leaders who question the efficacy of a diplomatic solution. [

] The Soviets may believe that such concessions portend a nonaligned posture that would limit Soviet influence in an independent Namibia.

36. Moscow's uncertainty over SWAPO's exact position in the Namibia talks stems in part from the diversity of opinion that exists within the SWAPO leadership itself. While Moscow has considerable influence within SWAPO—particularly with the military commanders—there is a significant element in SWAPO that is not pro-Soviet and most likely sees relations with the USSR as a necessary evil. Nujoma himself enjoys friendly relations with the Soviets and has leaned increasingly to the left in recent years, but he is probably more an opportunist than a committed Marxist.

37. Nor is the USSR the only foreign influence on SWAPO. Most of SWAPO's financial and humanitarian support comes from international organizations like the UN, World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, the OAU Liberation Committee, and a number of European countries, especially Sweden.

#### Cuba's Role

38. Cuba regards Angola as an important component of its Africa policy and therefore would oppose any Namibia settlement that would reduce its influence in Angola and elsewhere in the region. A high-level Cuban delegation toured the Frontline States in January and February 1982 after an unpublicized stopover in Moscow, where both sides presumably worked out a joint position on Namibia. The Cubans sought to strengthen their—and Moscow's—position among the Frontline States, apparently through new offers of assistance. Given Moscow's apparent desire for greater access to Frontline thinking on Namibia,

the Cubans probably proffered support for intelligence gathering, in hopes of gaining such access.

39. Public statements issued throughout the Cuban trip indicate that Namibia was the main topic of discussion. In addition, Cuban Foreign Minister Malmerca visited Luanda. An Angolan-Cuban joint communique was subsequently released outlining their position on the question of Cuban troops in Angola. TASS immediately published the statement with elaboration by Soviet analysts.

40. The communique stressed the lack of linkage between the Cuban troops in Angola and a Namibia settlement. It did, however, acknowledge that removal of the Cubans would be considered in the event that Namibia were independent, South African forces were south of the Orange River, and that threats/military aggression against Angola were ended.

41. Soviet comment on the communique stressed that the Cuban presence was necessary to protect Angolan internal as well as external security—a point not highlighted in the communique itself. This difference in emphasis is indicative of Moscow's concern that a Cuban withdrawal would presuppose a UNITA-MPLA reconciliation and would weaken the Soviet position. The difference in emphasis may also portend Soviet-Angolan friction on this issue.

#### IV. CONSTRAINTS AND OPTIONS

##### A. African Interests and Priorities

42. Inasmuch as Moscow's position in southern Africa rests on its ties to the Frontline States, future Soviet moves on the Namibia issue will be shaped, in part, by the priorities of the black Africans, as well as those of South Africa, the predominant economic and military power in the region. The Frontline States have a strong desire to resolve the various pressures associated with the Namibian insurgency stemming from Pretoria's continued willingness to use military raids, economic leverage, propaganda, and covert operations against them. The burdens are probably most severe for states closest to Namibia, particularly Angola, and to a lesser extent Zambia, which have suffered from South African cross-border military incursions against SWAPO base camps.

43. Pretoria is motivated by a desire to preserve its preeminent position in the region and to counter

Soviet influence. In pursuing those interests, its aggressive tactics have fostered an unwillingness on the part of Frontline States to engage in activity likely to provoke a strong South African reaction; the Soviets, for example, have had little success in persuading Frontline leaders to provide greater and more visible support to the ANC.

44. Some Frontline leaders are also reluctant to alienate the West. Aside from the need for Western economic assistance, they realize the necessity of retaining Western, especially American, cooperation if the current Namibian negotiations are to succeed. This belief is reinforced by their perception that the United States exercises such leverage over South Africa that it can ultimately "deliver" Pretoria on the Namibian issue.

#### B. Soviet Options

45. Moscow will carefully consider the risk to its current interests and equities before taking any significant steps to endorse or undermine a prospective Namibia settlement. We believe that future Soviet moves on the Namibia question will depend in large part on any Angola-related provisions of a proposed settlement plan.

46. Having clearly expressed their reservations about the Contact Group initiative and their position on the Cuban troop issue, the Soviets will closely monitor how the Frontline States, particularly Angola, and SWAPO proceed from here. If the Namibia talks move on to a position which Moscow views as non-threatening—that is, a Namibia settlement not linked to Angola—and which is acceptable to the Frontline States, the Soviets would probably bend to African preferences rather than jeopardize their credibility—and equities—in the region. Some Soviet writers have argued that South African intransigence will ultimately derail the settlement efforts, that Soviet moves to that end are, therefore, unnecessary, and that Moscow's interests would be best served by adopting a low profile.

47. Even if the Soviets find the evolving settlement tolerable, they will nevertheless seek to fuel tensions and suspicions to ensure that the final accord is reached in an atmosphere of antagonism and distrust rather than reconciliation. The Soviets would hope

that in such an environment, the Namibian government would be likely to turn to the USSR for support.

48. On the other hand, we believe that a comprehensive settlement package that leads to a Cuban troop withdrawal and an MPLA-UNITA reconciliation—even if accepted by the MPLA—would be resisted by the USSR and Cuba. The Soviet effort over the past few months to impede the Namibia peace process was probably prompted by discussion of a Cuban withdrawal from Angola—a move which the Soviets believe would not be undertaken unless there was an impending MPLA-UNITA reconciliation. Taken together, a Cuban troop withdrawal and an MPLA-UNITA rapprochement would undermine substantially the leverage and influence Moscow and Havana now enjoy in Luanda.

49. In the event that the Soviets perceived a comprehensive "package settlement" to be imminent, the Soviets would probably try to destroy the prospective settlement. Moscow could pursue several courses of action—most of which are not mutually exclusive. All of these entail risks, would antagonize the Frontline States, and might jeopardize Moscow's interests in the region. They include:

- Trying to provoke South Africa in hopes that Pretoria would react in ways that subsequently scuttled a settlement. For example, Moscow might enlarge the Cuban troop presence in Mozambique.
- Promoting a regional crisis such as a Shaba III—a new invasion of the Shaba region of Zaire by the Angolan-based Front for the National Liberation of the Congo (FLNC) rebels.
- Threatening Angola with a significant reduction in military and economic assistance if it agreed to the settlement package.
- Offering to increase dramatically Moscow's security commitment and military involvement with the Frontline States in order to encourage the black Africans to back SWAPO in a long war and to assuage their fears of South African retaliation.
- Promoting a coup attempt by pro-Soviet elements within the MPLA against those leaders who supported the settlement plan.

Other options may develop as the Namibia negotiations proceed. Moscow, for example, could certainly exploit any differences that might emerge between Angola and SWAPO.

50. Some specific indicators could be expected if Moscow proceeded to implement any of these options. The most difficult to recognize or anticipate is a coup attempt in Luanda.

] The movement of a large Cuban force to Mozambique would be more easily detected, as would FLNC preparations for a major invasion of Shaba.

] 51. Each of the Soviet options has inherent limitations and varying degrees of risk. To the extent that they require African involvement or acquiescence, Moscow does not enjoy unhindered freedom of action. A move to transfer a large Cuban combat force to Mozambique, for example, presumes the approval of President Machel, who might not view it as serving Maputo's interests; he might well fear that such a move would prompt a significant military reaction from South Africa that over the long term could transform Mozambique into the "new Angola."

52. Similarly, if the MPLA has opted for a comprehensive Namibia settlement, Luanda would not support a Shaba III effort. In addition to undermining the settlement, Angolan support for a Shaba III could jeopardize Luanda's expanding ties to the West and could prompt Zairian President Mobutu and his Western supporters to respond by aiding UNITA insurgents. Although the Soviets could try to instigate an invasion of Zaire by the FLNC, despite Angolan opposition, such action would antagonize Luanda and the other Frontline States and would not necessarily derail a settlement.

53. A Soviet move to force Luanda to reject a settlement or face a significant reduction of aid and assistance would carry serious risks. Apart from revealing Moscow's complete disregard for Angolan sovereignty or priorities, an ultimatum might even prompt Luanda to downgrade ties with the USSR. Indeed, if the Angolans had taken the necessary "leap of faith" to accept a package settlement, they presumably

would have considered the potential ramifications it would have for relations with Moscow. Much would depend on Soviet—and Angolan—readings of US willingness to assist Luanda after a settlement.

54. The Soviets might offer to increase substantially Moscow's security commitments to one or more of the Frontline States. The Africans, however, might view such an offer with some reticence; the burdens of continuing the SWAPO insurgency and the potential South African reaction to greater Soviet involvement could deter them from accepting such an offer. The Frontline States, moreover, might have differing opinions about the Soviet offer, for example, its usefulness, Soviet intentions, and implications for the regional situation; such differences would diminish the impact of Moscow's move. The Soviets might even include an offer of limited air and naval combat forces, but we believe this is unlikely since it would run a risk of military conflict with South Africa.

55. The Soviets might consider the option of promoting a coup by pro-Soviet elements within the MPLA. Such a move, however, would require the existence of a group that Moscow could count on and that was willing to undertake a seizure of power. Given the murky nature of MPLA politics—and our limited, uncertain information about MPLA factionalism—it is difficult to assess the probability of a Soviet-inspired coup attempt. Should Moscow decide to pursue this option, an unsuccessful effort could lead to the removal of the Soviets.

## V. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

56. If the present initiative collapses, or is indefinitely dragged out by Pretoria, the Soviets will be quick to remind the black Africans that their warnings and suspicions were correct and justified. US "hypocrisy" and "collusion" with South Africa will be highlighted in major propaganda campaigns aimed at further discrediting US intentions in the Third World. Moscow may also decide to renew the push for sanctions in the United Nations, thereby forcing the United States into the difficult position of defending Pretoria's intransigence or supporting sanctions against South Africa.

57. If the Contact Group settlement is achieved, US Western influence would be enhanced as it was in the case of Zimbabwe. In the short term, such a

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settlement would undercut the Soviet long-term goal of supplanting that influence in the region.

58. A successful settlement could heighten black African expectations of the United States and the West; Washington, for example, may come under pressure to push harder for changes in Pretoria's racial practices and to increase its practical commitment to regional economic development. The failure by Washington to meet these expectations, or the failure of a process of peaceful settlement to lead to regional

economic and political development, would provide the Soviets with a new opportunity to reassert their influence.

59. In any event, the Soviets would move to cultivate close ties to a SWAPO regime in Namibia, recognizing that such ties will contribute to new tensions with Pretoria. In sum, the Soviets would continue their practice of exploiting the regional instability which creates a need for Soviet arms assistance, presence, and therefore influence.

## ANNEX

### POSSIBLE SOVIET ACTIONS AFTER NAMIBIAN INDEPENDENCE

1. Inasmuch as we cannot know how long the negotiations will go on, the compromises that may develop, and the conditions under which a final settlement is hammered out—if at all—discussion of postsettlement developments is by definition highly speculative. Assuming that a settlement has been achieved and that SWAPO dominates the government of an independent Namibia, the following scenarios are possible.

#### Soviet Relations With a SWAPO-Ruled Namibia

2. Should the Contact Group initiative succeed, Soviet policy in a postsettlement Namibia would depend on the specific terms of a settlement, the conditions under which it is achieved, and the outcome of the elections. Moscow's options will depend largely on the disposition of the SWAPO government. SWAPO's outlook, in turn, will be influenced by a number of important considerations:

— Namibia's economic dependence on South Africa. Pretoria will retain Walvis Bay, the principal port in Namibia and the transit point for most of Namibia's exports and imports, until such time as its status is negotiated with an independent Namibia. South Africa provides Namibia with a significant amount of skilled labor, investment capital, and consumer goods, and it manages most of the country's essential mining economy. Namibia is also dependent upon South Africa's transportation and communication networks.

— South Africa as the region's predominant military power. The ever-present military threat posed by proximity to South Africa could be used to support divergent policies in a SWAPO government. Moderates may caution restraint to avoid provoking military responses while others might argue for a military buildup—which

would presumably mean asking the Soviet Bloc for military advisers and assistance.

— The Namibian population. SWAPO would be governing a population that is conservative in ideological terms and that has developed considerable political sophistication. The Ovambo tribe—that 47 percent of the population to which SWAPO looks for its main support—is fundamentally conservative and is influenced by the Lutheran Church. To run the country effectively SWAPO must also enjoy the support—or at least the acquiescence—of the small, powerful white community—those whites who choose to stay—that drives the key sectors of the economy, as well as the other black tribal groups which fear Ovambo domination.

— Divisions within SWAPO. SWAPO's external branch is currently dominated by a small clique of self-professed Marxists who must contend with a central committee and a rank and file that does not necessarily share the more radical views of the organization's leadership. SWAPO, in fact, is composed of a variety of competing factions that break down along tribal and ideological lines. Inner party tensions, which have flared up significantly in the past, could do so again under conditions of independence, something the SWAPO leadership will seek to avoid. SWAPO also has an apparently moribund internal wing that is clearly less radical than the dominant external wing; revived, it could prove to be a moderating force in a SWAPO government.

— South African and Western receptiveness to a SWAPO government. SWAPO's outlook will be influenced by the response it receives in Pretoria and the West in general. If Pretoria opts to maintain its economic relationship and various Western states grant economic assistance—as

they did in Zimbabwe—SWAPO might decide to balance its ties to Moscow in order to avoid jeopardizing other essential economic ties to the West. If a bellicose Pretoria minimized or severed economic links and if only negligible economic aid were forthcoming from the West, Namibia might have to pursue a much closer relationship with the Soviets.

#### Moscow and a Pragmatic SWAPO

3. Given these considerations, we believe that SWAPO, at least initially, would pursue a pragmatic course of moderation, for example, balancing its ties to the major powers while seeking commitments of investments and economic assistance. While Moscow would have few immediate returns to show for its long-term investment in SWAPO, the Soviets and their East European allies would certainly have bilateral ties with Windhoek and would presumably cultivate the pro-Soviet elements within the government and in the military—many of whose officers have had Soviet training. Moscow probably believes that a Namibia-South Africa “detente” would be short lived, and that SWAPO would subsequently turn to the USSR for arms and military assistance. Similarly, a severe economic decline, coupled with a loss of investment and white emigration might prompt a move toward Moscow, particularly if SWAPO became preoccupied with internal and external security threats.

#### Moscow and a Radical SWAPO

4. Should SWAPO eschew the pragmatic approach and seek to implement radical domestic policies together with close affiliation to Moscow, the Soviets would quickly exploit the opportunity for influence with the new regime. Moscow would offer arms and military assistance, including advisers, to meet Wind-

hoek's security needs. Such moves would undoubtedly elicit a strong military response from Pretoria. Windhoek's close relationship with Moscow, moreover, might discourage Western investment and economic assistance, and thereby add to Namibia's economic woes. The security threats posed by South Africa, as well as potential domestic discontent over the economy, would probably make the SWAPO radicals even more dependent upon the USSR for their position and military survival.

#### Moscow and a Neutralized SWAPO

5. SWAPO might initially find itself compelled to act moderately either because it was forced to share power with a more conservative political party or because of agreements made before independence that mandated that Namibia follow, in effect, a moderate course in foreign and domestic policy. In either case, these circumstances would represent a setback for Soviet policy. If SWAPO chose to acquiesce to these restraints, Moscow would likely maintain a low profile in Namibia and quietly encourage the regime's radicalization.

6. If, however, SWAPO quickly sought to override formal preindependence agreements or sought to subvert political power sharing arrangements—actions which probably would precipitate a hostile South African response—SWAPO might soon turn to the Soviet Bloc for assistance in order to sustain its position. Although Moscow would probably prefer more cautious steps to attain power, the Soviets would feel compelled to support SWAPO moves. In such a case, the Soviets would argue that the UN had previously recognized SWAPO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Namibian people, and that the settlement was a sham. Moscow would support a SWAPO call for guerrilla warfare if a non-SWAPO group came to power after a settlement.