

"Season of violence': the ANC-SWAPO alliance and the creation of a new Southern Africa, 1966-1990'

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ABSTRACT: With both countries falling under South African jurisdiction, the trajectories of the liberation struggles in South Africa and Namibia were intertwined. From this common cause, an informal alliance between the ANC and SWAPO was created. By the early 1970s, the South African government was willing to separate the constitutional fates of the two countries. But the matter of the terms of the proposed transition to majority rule was to delay Namibian decolonization for almost two decades. The issues for the South African government were that allowing Namibia to achieve independence under a government dominated by SWAPO would potentially galvanize radical resistance in South Africa. SWAPO, like the ANC, was a movement in which there were deep anti-capitalist strains. South Africa also feared that in the context of the Cold War, a SWAPO victory would open up Namibia as a forward base to be used by liberation movements armed by the Soviet Union. Developments in Angola and Mozambique from the mid-1970s onwards convinced Pretoria that its fears were not idle. The "constructive engagement" of South Africa by the Reagan administration was a reflection of the United States' shared concerns about these matters. South Africa "United States pressure, combined with the decline and ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union, was to succeed in steadily forcing the liberation movements to circumscribe the parameters of the change they envisaged. This created the basis for negotiated solutions. The Namibia model was then adopted by Pretoria as a template for transition in South Africa